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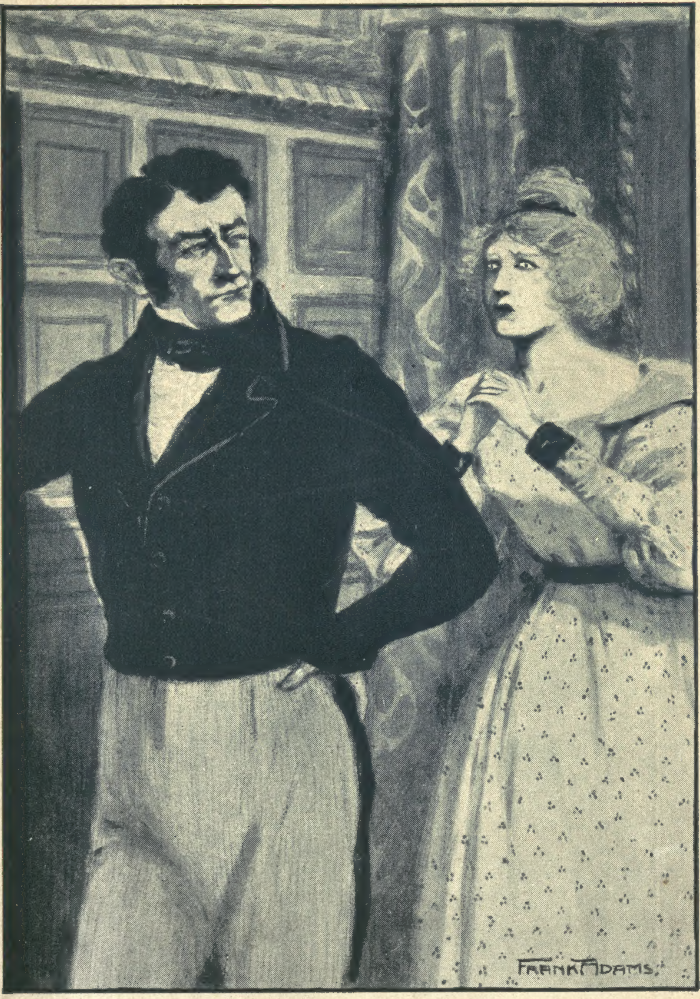
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THE MOUTH OF HELL

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INTRODUCTION

"I SIT here reading Dumas' last. Dumas is astonishing; he never will write himself out, there's no dust on his shoes after all this running, his last books are better than his first." So wrote Elizabeth Barrett Browning from Florence to a friend in the winter of 1852-3. Dumas was then about fifty; he had written hundreds of volumes of romances and some scores of plays, and both romances and plays were streaming forth as fast as ever. "But for him the day of French novels seems over," wrote a reviewer at this time; "George Sand is silent; Balzac and Soulié are dead; Eugène Sue has fallen into hopeless inanity and wearisomeness; Paul de Kock has exhausted his gaiety; Madame Reybaud is silent; Dumas alone is as active as ever." Our author had lost his excellent collaborator Maquet, but he was "as active as ever," and in the opinion of Mrs. Browning his last books were "better than his first."

Dumas' performances were indeed marvellous. At one time it was pretty generally believed that the name Dumas was not that of a man, but of a company of men; but as the books and plays multiplied, it was seen that, with a few exceptions, they hung together just as the Waverley novels hang together. "Now listen," wrote Mrs. Browning, "Alexandre Dumas *does* write his own books, that's a fact. You know I always maintained it, through the odour of Dumas in the books, but people swore the contrary with great, foolish oaths worth nothing. Maquet prepares historical materials, gathers together notes, and so on, but Dumas writes every word of his books with his own hand, and with a facility amounting to inspiration, said my informant, a most credible witness and highly cultivated man."

Mrs. Browning's conviction was shared by most people when Maquet, after the dissolution of the partnership, wrote novels which proved failures, while Dumas produced romances of the quality of *The Mouth of Hell* (*Le Trou de l'Enfer*), its sequel *Dieu Dispose*, and *Olympe de Clèves*.

These books were enormously enjoyed even by the most jaded readers, who were accustomed to take their fiction, like pills, in small doses from the feuilleton columns of the daily papers. Indeed, from first to last, perhaps they got more enjoyment out of Dumas than did any other class of readers. One's favourite paper was "running" a romance by Sue, Soulié, or Reybaud, in which one was more or less interested. Suddenly one morning there was an announcement. The great, the illustrious Alexandre Dumas was returning from Switzerland, or from Russia, or from somewhere else, and immediately on his arrival was going to set to work upon a long romance, the first chapters of which would appear at the beginning of the new year. The subject of the romance, known to the editor of the journal, must be a profound secret, locked in his inviolable bosom, but the title would presently be made known. The next news was that Dumas, younger than ever in appearance and wearing several new decorations, bestowed upon him by potentates in whose dominions he had been travelling, had returned to Paris, that the editor had seen him, nay, had shaken hands with him, and had been promised the first chapter "very shortly." The next announcement gave the title, *Le Trou de l'Enfer* (say), and with the advent of the new year, so impatiently awaited, came Chapter I. And with the appearance of that chapter life became different, brighter, lighter, more interesting. One's old friend, Alphonse or Adolphe, was taking the same paper, and one had the most exciting arguments with him over the romance as it daily progressed. He proved to be wrong over and over again in his prognostications about the course of events in the book, but one day, on the authority of a bookseller who knew Dumas, he averred that the Emperor Napoleon was about to be introduced into the romance. Sure enough he *was* introduced, and Alphonse or Adolphe was henceforth a man of distinction.

"It is for the people that I always write," said Dumas, but besides "the people" he had a great following among cultivated readers, of whom, as we have seen, Mrs. Browning was one. Then there was the mass of subscribers to circulating libraries, and the Mudies of the day had one half of their shelves devoted to Dumas, and the other half to his literary brethren. If serious illness overtook one, or business occupied all one's time for a few months, Dumas shot ahead, and on returning to the literary world one found not only that the two romances one had been reading were completed, but that fifteen or twenty volumes with a new title were in existence. "Dumas' last, Sir, is *Les Mohicans de Paris;* there are to be thirty-two volumes, only fifteen are published, volume sixteen we are expecting to-morrow." And this incessant literary production went on for forty years!

To write *The Mouth of Hell*, our author gave a fresh turn to his wonderful kaleidoscope, then, looking at the pattern, he pronounced it good. The reader, when his eyes have become accustomed to the brilliance of the colours, recognizes the fantastic pattern to be one of Dumas'. If he care for dramatic power, invention, gaiety, wit, he will plunge into the book and know only one anxiety—that the end will come too soon; if he dislike extravagance, a certain simplicity that at times amounts to childishness, and at the same time an exotic quality which is not far removed from savagery—he will leave the book on one side, and take up Stendhal or Balzac. The reader who admires Dumas will remark that the best scenes in the book are precisely those which appear to be improvised by the author; the reader who dislikes him will see nothing of value in chapters which were so clearly written without hesitation or effort.

No book of Dumas' has a more idyllic commencement, and none has more shocking incidents; in no book is he more airily fantastic—his fancy takes him at times as a breeze does a water-jet, showering it in diamonds over foliage and turf—in none is he more bent on impressing the reader with unrealities and absurdities. He is by turns wise and foolish, witty and dull. He seems to have the key to all knowledge, but he forgets to turn it. He sets gaily out as if to tell a short story, and at the end of a long one the reader finds that he is at the beginning of another, and a much longer one. *Le Trou de l'Enfer*, which was published by Cadot (Paris) in four volumes in 1850-51, is in fact but the first part of *Dieu Dispose.*

R. S. G.

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THE MOUTH OF HELL

CHAPTER I

STORM AND SONG

WHO were the two travellers wandering amongst the ravines and the rocks of the Odenwald, during the night of the 18th May, 1810, is a question which, at a distance of four paces off, not even their most intimate friends would have been able to answer, so profound was the darkness. In vain to scan the sky for a gleam of the moon, a glint of the stars; the sky was blacker than the earth, and the heavy clouds which swept across its surface seemed like an inverted ocean threatening the world with a second deluge.

A confused mass moving against a motionless background, nothing more would the eye, most trained to darkness, have been able to distinguish of the two riders. Occasionally a neigh of terror mingled with the whistling of the squall in the fir-trees, or a shower of sparks struck from the stones by the hoofs of the horses, this was all that was seen, all that was heard of the two travellers.

More and more imminent grew the storm. Great whirlwinds of dust blinded the travellers and their steeds. Whilst these hurricanes lasted the branches writhed and groaned; plaintive shrieks resounded in the depths of the valley, then, re-echoing from rock to rock, seemed to scale the mountain which tottered as if about to crumble into ruin. And each time that one of these storm-blasts rose from the earth to the sky, the crags, torn from their granite sockets, crashed noisily down the precipices, and the century-old trees, uprooted, torn from their base, hurled themselves as if in frantic despair headlong into the abyss.

Nothing is more terrible than destruction in darkness, nothing more appalling than noise in shadow. When sight cannot calculate the danger, the danger increases immeasurably, and the terrified imagination overleaps all the limits of the possible.

Suddenly the wind ceased, the clamour died away, everything was still, everything motionless; all nature held its breath, waiting for the storm to break forth afresh. In the midst of this silence a voice was heard; it was that of one of the two riders:

"Upon my word! Samuel," he was saying, "I must own that it was a most unlucky idea of yours that we should leave Erbach at this hour and in this weather. We were in an excellent inn, such an one as we had not come across since we left Frankfort a week ago. You had the choice between your bed and the storm, between a bottle of excellent Hockheim and a wind, compared with which the Sirocco and the Simoon are zephyrs, and you choose the storm and the wind! Quiet! Sturm!" interrupted the young man, reining in his horse which had shied suddenly; "quiet! If," he went on, "there were even something pleasant to hurry us forward, if we were bound for some delightful 'rendezvous' where we were certain of finding both the rising sun and the smile of a loved one. But the mistress we are going to rejoin is an old blue-stocking, by name the University of Heidelberg. The 'rendezvous' awaiting us is, probably, a duel to the death. At all events, we are only summoned for the 20th. Oh! the more I think of it, the more do I feel that we are downright madmen not to have remained there, sheltered from wind and rain. But that is my nature; I always give in to you; you lead and I follow."

"Complain about following me!"

replied Samuel, in a somewhat ironical tone, "when it is I who light your way. If I had not led the way you would have broken your neck ten times over by now, rolling from the top of the mountain to the bottom. Come, steady now, and settle yourself in your stirrups; here's a fir-tree barring the way."

There was a moment's silence, during which the noise of two horses clearing an obstacle was heard.

"Holloa!" said Samuel. Then, turning towards his companion: "Well," said he, "my poor Julius."

"Well!" said Julius, "I still complain of your obstinacy, and I am right; instead of following the road indicated to us, that is to say, skirting the little river Mumling, which would have brought us direct to the Neckar, you take a cross-road, pretending that you know the country, when you have never been in it before, I am sure. As you know, I wanted to take a guide."

"A guide! what for? Bah! I know the way——"

"Yes, you know it so well, that here we are lost in the hills, knowing neither which is north, nor which south, and unable either to go forward or to go back. And now we shall have to endure until morning the threatened downpour, and what a downpour!——See, there are the first drops. So laugh now, you who laugh at everything, or at least pretend to do so."

"And why should I not laugh?" said Samuel. "Is it not a laughable thing, to hear a great fellow of twenty, a student of Heidelberg, complaining like a shepherdess who has not gathered in her flock in time? Laugh! much merit there would be in that! I am going to do better than laugh, my dear Julius, I am going to sing."

And, as a matter of fact, the young man began to sing in a harsh, sonorous voice the first verse of some strange unknown song, probably improvised and which at least derived its merit from the situation:

"I laugh at the rain
Heaven's nasal catarrh!
'Tis gentler by far
Than the tears of man's pain."

As Samuel concluded the last word of his couplet, the last note of his air, a vivid flash of lightning rent, from one end to the other of the horizon, the veil of clouds spread over the surface of the heavens by the hand of the storm, and illumined with a light, splendid yet sinister, the forms of the two riders.

Both appeared to be the same age, that is, from nineteen to twenty-one years; but there the resemblance ended.

The one, evidently Julius, graceful, fair, pale, with blue eyes, was of medium height, but admirably proportioned. He might have been taken for a youthful Faust.

The other, evidently Samuel, tall and meagre, with shifty grey eyes, thin mocking lips, black hair and eyebrows, high forehead, and sharp, protruding nose, seemed the living image of Mephistopheles.

Both wore a short riding coat, of some dark shade, confined at the waist by a leathern girdle, light trousers, soft boots and a white cap with a little chain completed the costume.

As was implied by several things Julius had said, both were students.

Surprised and dazzled by the lightning, Julius started and shut his eyes. Samuel, on the contrary, looked up, and gazed unflinchingly at the lightning.

Then all relapsed into black darkness. The lightning had scarcely died away ere a loud clap of thunder resounded, and went rolling in the depths of the mountain from echo to echo.

"My dear Samuel," said Julius, "I think we would do well to stop. Our advance might attract the thunder-bolt."

For sole reply, Samuel burst into a peal of laughter, and dug his two spurs in the flanks of his horse, who galloped off, making the sparks fly, and scattering the pebbles, whilst the horseman sang:

"I laugh at the fire
The lightning displays!
A bitter look preys
With results much more dire!"

He continued thus a hundred paces, then turning sharply round, he galloped back to Julius.

"In Heaven's name!" cried the latter, "do be quiet, Samuel. Of what use all this bravado? Is this a time to sing? Beware that God does not accept your challenge!"

A second clap of thunder, more terrible and more resounding even than the first, burst immediately over their heads.

"Third verse!" said Samuel, "I am a privileged sportsman; the heavens accompany my song, and the thunder bellows the refrain.

Then, in imitation of the thunder which had roared more loudly, so Samuel sang in a louder voice:

"I laugh at the storm
Summer's cough of disdain!
Love's harsh cry of pain
No such contrast can form!".

And, as the thunder was this time behindhand: "Come now, chorus!" said he, looking up at the sky; "thunder, you are out of time!"

But, in default of the thunder, the rain answered to Samuel's call, and began to fall in torrents. Soon the flashes of lightning and claps of thunder no longer needed to be provoked, and succeeded each other without interruption. Julius felt that sort of uneasiness from which even the bravest is not exempt, before the omnipotence of the elements; the littleness of man in Nature's anger overwhelmed him. Samuel, on the contrary, was radiant. A savage joy shone in his eyes; he stood erect in his stirrups, he waved his cap as if, seeing that danger shunned him, he longed to draw it to him; glad to feel his brows swept by his damp hair, laughing, singing, happy.

"What were you saying just now, Julius?" cried he, as if under the influence of some weird inspiration; "you wanted to stay at Erbach? you wanted to miss this glorious night? Then you have never felt the wild joy of battling with the elements, my dear boy. I brought you away because I expected this weather. My nerves have been on edge and irritated the whole day, but now I am well again. Hurrah for the hurricane. How the devil do you not feel this delight! Is not this war of the heavens in harmony with these peaks and these precipices, these bogs and these ruins? Are you eighty years of age, that you should wish everything to be as quiet and dead as your heart? You have your passions, however calm you may appear. Very well! then let the elements have theirs. As for me, I am young; I feel my twenty years singing in the depths of my heart, a bottle of wine boiling in my brain, and I love the thunder. King Lear used to call the storm his daughter; I call it my sister. Never fear for us, Julius. I do not laugh at the lightning, I laugh with it—I do not disdain it, I love it. The storm and I are friends. It would not wish to harm me, I resemble it. Men think it malevolent, they are fools! the storm is a benevolent necessity. It is the moment to learn a little science. This powerful electricity, which rumbles and flames, does not kill and destroy at random, except to add to the sum of vegetable and animal life. I too, I am a storm-man. It is the time to study a little philosophy. I too would not hesitate to do evil that good might come, to employ death so as to produce life. The gist is that a superior intelligence animates these acts of violence, and justifies the murderous means by the richness of result."

"Be quiet, you do yourself an injustice, Samuel."

Superstitious child! Do you imagine, because we are astride among scenery suggestive of 'Der Freyschütz' that I am the devil, Satan, Beelzebub or Mephistopheles, and that I am going to change myself into a black cat, a dog-fiend? Oh! oh! what is this?"

This exclamation was extorted from Samuel by a quick movement of his horse, who, utterly terrified, had just backed on to that of Julius.

Evidently some danger lurked in their road. The young man, leaning in the direction whence the danger threatened, waited for a flash. He had not long to wait. The heavens were rent; a sheet of flame swept the horizon from one end to the other and lighted up the landscape.

The path was interrupted by a yawning abyss, the lightning had flashed against the sides of a precipice, then died away, without allowing the gaze of the two young men to fathom its depth.

"There's a fine gap!" said Samuel, compelling his horse to approach nearer to the precipice.

"But do be careful!" cried Julius.

"Bless me! I must look at it quite close," said Samuel.

And, dismounting from his horse, he threw the bridle over Julius's arm, approached the abyss and gazed curiously into it.

But, as his gaze could not pierce the darkness, he pushed over a large stone which plunged into the depths.

He listened, but heard nothing.

"Good," said he, "my boulder must have fallen on soft earth, for it has not made the least noise." He had just finished speaking when a great splash resounded from the sombre depths.

"Ah! the abyss is deep!" said Samuel. "Who the devil will tell me what this gap is called?"

"The Mouth of Hell!" answered a clear, grave voice from the other side of the gulf.

"Who answers me from over there?" exclaimed Samuel with astonishment, if not fear. "I see no one."

Another flash lit up the sky, and, on the opposite side of the pit, the two young men beheld a strange apparition.

CHAPTER II

THE APPARITION

A YOUNG girl, standing erect, her hair unbound, her arms and legs bare, a black hood inflated by the wind waving round her head, a short skirt of reddish hue, dyed an even deeper red by the lightning, beautiful with a strange wild beauty, having at her side a horned beast which she held by a leash, —such was the vision which appeared to the two young men on the farther side of the Mouth of Hell.

The lightning died away, and the vision with it.—"Did you see, Samuel?" asked Julius, far from reassured.

"Egad! yes,—saw and heard too."

"Do you know, if it were allowable for intelligent men to believe in witches, we might easily believe we have just seen one?"

"But," said Samuel, "it is one, I sincerely hope! You saw that nothing was wanting, not even the goat. However, the witch is pretty. Ay! little one!" he cried.

And he listened as he had done when he rolled the boulder into the abyss. But, again, nothing answered him.

"By the Mouth of Hell!" said Samuel, "I will not be foiled."

Snatching his horse's bridle, he leapt into the saddle, and, with one bound, and heedless of the warnings of Julius, he galloped round to the other side of the precipice; in a moment he had reached the spot where the vision had appeared; but it was in vain that he sought, he saw nothing, — neither girl, nor animal, nor witch, nor goat.

Samuel was not the man to rest satisfied with this; he examined the precipice, searched the bushes and brambles, struck a light, went hither and thither. But, at last, Julius imploring him to give up this useless quest, Samuel rejoined his companion, angry and vexed; he was one of those tenacious beings, who make it a practice to go to the end of every trail, to the bottom of everything, and in whom doubt arouses, not a train of thought, but irritation.

They resumed their way.

The flashes of lightning guided them to some extent, affording them at the same time a magnificent sight. At intervals the forest was dyed purple from the top of the mountain to the bottom of the ravine, while the stream at their feet assumed the deadly whiteness of steel.

Julius had said nothing for the last quarter of an hour, and Samuel continued to mock at the last bursts of the dying thunder, when suddenly Julius stopped his horse, and cried:

"Ah! this will do for us."

And he pointed out to Samuel a ruined tower, which rose on their right.

"That ruin?" said Samuel.

"Yes, we are sure to find some corner there to shelter us. We can stay there until the storm is over, or at any rate, until the rain ceases."

"Yes, and our clothes will dry on our backs, and we shall catch a fine cold on the chest by standing still in our damp garments! Never mind! let us see what the place is like."

In a few steps they reached the foot of the ruin; but it was not easy to gain admittance to it. The castle, abandoned by man, had been invaded by bushes. The entrance was obstructed by these plants and shrubs, that flourished amid the crumbling walls. Samuel urged on his horse through everything, adding, to the prick of the spur, the sting of the thorns.

Julius' horse followed, and the two friends found themselves in the interior of the castle, if indeed such words as castle and interior may be applied to crumbling ruins, open on all sides to the winds of heaven.

"Oh! oh! you have brought us to this place for shelter?" said Samuel, looking up; "it seems to me, that, to attain that end, a roof or a ceiling would be indispensable; unfortunately, roof and ceilings are conspicuous by their absence."

In point of fact, time had made of this castle, which perhaps in old days had been powerful and imposing, a miserable skeleton; of the four walls, but three now remained, and even these were rent by their windows being enlarged out of all proportion; the fourth had crumbled away even to the last stone.

The horses stumbled at every step; roots protruded and in places the pavement was cracked and broken into holes, as if the vegetation, imprisoned for three hundred years, had succeeded, by the long toil of centuries, in piercing, with its gnarled and stubborn fingers, the stones of its prison.

The three surviving walls swayed and bent under the blast of the tempest. Night birds of every kind circled round and round in this open hall, greeting each breath of the storm, each roar of thunder, with horrid cries, from among which rose above all others the scream of the osprey, whose note resembles the cry of a murdered man.

Samuel surveyed everything with that habit of minute scrutiny peculiar to himself.

"Good!" said he to Julius, "if you like to stay here until morning, I am equally willing to do so. We are remarkably well here, almost as well as in the open air, and have, besides, this advantage, that the wind rushes much more furiously into this eyrie. We are, to be perfectly exact, in the funnel of the storm. And then these crows and bats, deuce take them! are not a pleasure to be scorned. These quarters suit me splendidly. Eh! why! see that owl, the philosopher's bird, she is fixing her burning eyes upon us; is she not the most delightful thing in the world? Exclusive of all this, we will be able to boast of having galloped round a dining-room."

So saying, Samuel put spurs to his horse and urged him towards the spot where the wall was missing; but scarce had he gone ten paces before the horse reared so violently, pivoting on itself, that its eyes looked full into Samuel's face.

At the same moment a voice cried:

"Stop! the Neckar!"

Samuel looked down.

He hung suspended two hundred feet above the river. In turning upon itself, the horse's two fore-legs had described a semi-circle in empty space.

The mountain, at this spot, was perpendicular; the castle had been built overlooking the abyss, which formed part of the strength of its position.

Wild creepers ran from end to end like a garland, clinging to the ragged surface of the granite, so that the old stronghold, undermined by the ages and almost plunging down the precipice, into which it was ready to fall, seemed only held together by a thin festoon of ivy.

One step more must have meant certain death to rider and horse.

And thus the horse, with bristling mane, flaming nostrils, foaming mouth, trembled in every muscle, shook in every limb.

But as for Samuel, calm, or rather sceptical as usual, the danger he had so narrowly escaped aroused in him but one reflection.

"Upon my word! the same voice," said he.

Samuel recognised the voice as being that of the young girl who had warned him from the Mouth of Hell.

"Oh! this time," Samuel exclaimed, "were you what I accused you of being, a witch of the third power, I shall find you."

And he urged his horse in the direction from which the voice had proceeded.

But, this time again, in vain he searched, in vain the lightning gleamed, he did not find, he did not see anyone.

"Come, come, Samuel!" said Julius, who now was not sorry to leave these ruins, full of croakings, of pitfalls, and of precipices; "come, let us get on our way! we have already wasted too much time!"

Samuel followed, looking searchingly round him with an annoyance which the darkness enabled him to conceal.

They found the road again, and continued on their way; Julius, serious and silent; Samuel, laughing and swearing like one of Schiller's bandits.

A discovery restored some hope to Julius. On leaving the ruins, he perceived a pathway, which, by a gentle but broken incline, sloped down to the river. Probably this path, which was practicable and evidently frequented, led to some village, or at least to some house.

But at the end of half an hour they had

come across nothing but the river, skirting its steep bank and ascending its noisy course.

No shelter of any sort was to be seen.

During all this time the rain fell with the same violence. The clothes of the two men were wet through; the horses were exhausted with fatigue. Julius was worn out; Samuel himself was beginning to lose his buoyant spirits.

"By Satan!" cried he, "the affair grows tame, for more than ten minutes we have had neither thunder nor lightning. This is nothing but a downpour. In truth, heaven plays an unkind jest upon us. I was quite willing to put up with a great excitement but not with a wearisome annoyance. The storm mocks me in its turn; I defy it to strike me with its thunderbolt, and it chills me to the bone."

Julius did not reply.

"By my troth!" said Samuel, "I feel strongly inclined to try what an invocation would do."

And in a loud and solemn voice he added:

"In the name of the Mouth of Hell from which we beheld you issue! in the name of the goat, your best friend! in the name of the ravens, the bats, and the owls who have abounded in our path since our happy encounter with you! charming witch, who hast already addressed me twice, I adjure thee! In the name of the gulf, of the goat, of the ravens, of the bats, of the owls, appear! appear! appear! and tell us if we are near any human habitation."

"If you had strayed from your path," said the clear voice of the young girl in the darkness, "I would have warned you. You are in the right road; follow it ten minutes more, and you will find on its right, behind a group of lindens, hospitable shelter. Till we meet again!"

Samuel looked up in the direction from which the voice proceeded, and perceived a kind of shadow which appeared to hover at about ten feet above his head, running up the side of the mountain.

He felt instinctively that she was going to disappear.

"Stop!" Samuel cried, "I have yet something to ask you."

"What is it?" said she, as she stood still on the top of the rock, of which the pointed extremity was such, that it seemed impossible for a foot, even the foot of a witch, to stand upon it.

He looked about for some way by which he could get up at her; but the pathway along which the two horsemen rode was hollowed out of the rock. It was a path for men; the one the witch followed was only a goat-track.

Seeing that he could not reach the beautiful girl by means of his horse, he determined to reach her at least by his voice.

Turning to his friend "Well! my dear Julius," he said, "I was enumerating to you, an hour ago, the harmonies of this night; the tempest; my twenty years, the wine of the old stream, and, by thunder! I was forgetting love! love, which comprises all the others, love, the real youth, love, the real storm, love, the real intoxication."

Then, urging forward his horse, with one bound he approached nearer the girl.

"I love you!" said he, "charming witch. "Love me too, and, if you will, we will have a fine wedding. Yes, at once. When queens get married, the fountains are made to play and guns are fired. At our wedding, God makes the rain to fall and the thunder to roar. I see very well that it is a real goat you have there, and I take you to be a witch, but I will have you — I give you my soul, give me your beauty."

"You are impious towards God and ungrateful towards me," said the young girl as she disappeared.

Once more Samuel tried to follow her, but decidedly the mountain side was unscaleable.

"Come, come, let us go on," said Julius.

"And where do you want me to go?" said Samuel out of temper.

"To the house to which she directed us of course."

"Nonsense! you believe it?" retorted Samuel. "And if this house does exist, who is to tell you that it is not a cut-throat place to which it is the mission of our fair guide to lure 'belated travellers'?"

"You heard what she told you, Samuel? Ungrateful towards her, blasphemous towards God."

"Come on, then, since you wish it," said the young man. "I have no faith, but if it can afford you any pleasure, I can pretend to believe."

"See, unbeliever!" rejoined Julius ten minutes later.

And he pointed out to his friend the cluster of linden trees which the young girl had spoken of. A bright light shining through the trees indicated the existence of a house. Both rode under the limes and arrived at the gateway.

Julius raised his hand to the bell.

"You ring at the cut-throats' door?" said Samuel.

Julius made no answer, but rang the bell.

"I wager," said Samuel, laying his hand on the young man's arm, "I wager you it will be the girl with the goat who will open us the door."

The inner door opened and a human form, carrying a muffled lantern, advanced to the gate which Julius had rung.

"Whoever you are," said Julius to the person who approached, "consider the weather and our present plight; for more than four hours we have been walking beside precipices and torrents; give us shelter for the night."

"Enter," said a voice familiar to the young men.

It was that of the young girl who had addressed them on the road to the ruined castle, and at the Mouth of Hell.

"You see," said Samuel to Julius, who could not repress a shudder.

"What house is this?" asked Julius.

"Well! are you not coming in, gentlemen?" asked the girl.

"Egad! yes, of course we are!" said Samuel. "I would enter into hell itself, provided the portress were a pretty girl."

CHAPTER III

A MAY MORNING

THE next morning, when Julius awoke and found himself in a comfortable bed, it was some time before he could realize where he was.

He opened his eyes. A glad ray of sunshine, glinting through the openings of a shutter, danced cheerfully about, alive with sprightly atoms, on a floor, spotlessly white and clean. A joyous concert of birds added melody to the brightness.

Julius sprang out of bed. A dressing gown and slippers had been laid out for him; he slipped them on and went to the window.

Scarcely had he opened the window and pushed back the shutters, ere the room was, as it were, flooded with song, sunshine and perfume. The room overlooked a beautiful garden, full of birds and of flowers. Beyond the garden, the valley of the Neckar, traversed and quickened by the river. In the distance, on the horizon, the mountains.

And over all, the radiant sky of a glorious May morning; and in the midst of all, that exuberant life with which the air is alive in the springtime of the year.

The storm had swept every cloud from the sky. The vault of heaven was everywhere of that calm deep blue which suggests an idea of what the smile of God must be.

Julius experienced an indefinable sensation of restfulness and well being. The garden, freshened and fertilised by the night's rain, was overflowing with sap. The sparrows, the warblers, and the goldfinches, celebrating their gladness at having escaped the storm, converted each branch into an orchestra. The raindrops played upon by the sun turned each blade of grass into an emerald.

A vine crept lightly in at the casement, and tried to find its way into the room to pay Julius a friendly visit.

But suddenly vine, birds, dew on the grass, songs in the leaves, mountains in the distance, splendours in the sky, Julius saw nothing, heard nothing, of them all.

A young pure voice had reached his ear. He leant forward, and, in the shade of a honeysuckle, perceived the most charming group fancy can paint.

A young girl of scarce fifteen summers held on her knees a little boy of about five years of age, and was teaching him to read.

The young girl was of the most winsome grace imaginable. Blue eyes brimming over with sweetness and intelligence, hair of palest gold clustering in such profusion over her head, that her neck seemed too slender to support its weight, a witching symmetry of form. These are words too weak to describe the exquisite creature which Julius beheld. Her chief charm lay in her bright youthfulness. Her whole personality seemed an ode to innocence, a hymn to truth, a sonnet to springtime. There was an inexpressible harmony between the young girl and the glorious morning, between the bright look which shone in her eyes and the dew that glistened on the grass. It was frame and picture.

What she possessed above all was exquisite grace. But her gracefulness did not result from delicacy, everything about her was eloquent of life and health.

She was dressed in German fashion; a white bodice, tight-fitting to the waist; a dress, white also, festooned at the bottom, fell in graceful folds from her hips, and was sufficiently short to disclose to view a pretty foot and ankle.

The little boy whom she held on her knees, fair and rosy, with flaxen curls, was learning his lesson with a serious and attentive air. He was saying his alphabet, pointing with his tiny finger to each big letter. After he had named a letter, he looked anxiously up into his mistress's face to see whether he had made a mistake. If he were wrong, she corrected him and he began again. If he were right, she smiled and he went on.

Julius could not take his eyes off this charming picture. This exquisite group in this exquisite spot, the voice of the child with the warbling of the birds, the beauty of the young girl with the beauty of nature, the springtime of life, with the springtime of earth; these were all in such contrast to the violent emotions of the night, that a wave of tenderness swept over him, and he became absorbed in delicious contemplation.

He was suddenly roused from it by feeling a head touch his own. It was Samuel who had just entered his room, and approached on tip-toe to see what Julius was gazing at so attentively.

Julius, with an imploring gesture, warned him to make no noise. But Samuel, a stranger to sentiment, gave no heed to his request, and, as the vine somewhat intercepted his view, he pushed it aside with his hand.

The rustling of the leaves made the young girl look up and a faint flush rose to her face. The little boy also turned to the window, and, on seeing the strangers, neglected his book. He made a mistake over nearly every letter. The young girl seemed to become slightly impatient, more from embarrassment at the strangers' gaze than from the child's mistakes; then, a moment later, she quietly closed the book, put the child down, got up, and passing under Julius's window returned the young men's salute, and went into the house with the boy.

Julius turned towards Samuel with a look of annoyance.

"What business had you to startle her?" said he.

"Yes, I understand," said Samuel mockingly, "the sparrow-hawk has frightened the lark. But, do not be anxious, those birds are tame and invariably return. Well, after all, you have not been murdered in the night? Judging by appearances, this cut-throat place is fairly habitable. I see that your room is no worse than mine. In fact, yours has the advantage over mine, in being adorned with these engravings of the history of Tobias."

"It seems to me I have been dreaming," said Julius. "Come, let us go over the events of last night; it really was the pretty girl with the ugly goat who opened the door to us, was it not? By some mysterious sign, she imposed silence, showed us where to stable our horses; then, leading the way into the house, she conducted us to the second storey, to these two rooms which adjoin; lighted this lamp; made a curtsey, and, without having spoken a word, she hurriedly disappeared. You seemed to me, Samuel, almost as stupefied as myself. Yet, you wanted to follow her, but I restrained you, and we made up our minds to go to bed and have a good night's rest. Now is that what happened?"

"Your recollections," said Samuel, "are most correct, and, in all probability, most realistically true. And I dare swear that now you forgive me for having induced you to leave the inn last night. Will you again rail against the storm? Was I wrong in telling you that evil produced good? The thunder and the rain have already procured us two very comfortably furnished rooms, a view of most beautiful country, and the acquaintance of a lovely maiden, whom politeness demands that we should make love to, the laws of hospitality likewise demanding from her that she should return our love."

"Blaspheming again!" said Julius.

Samuel was about to utter some jest in reply, when the door of the room opened and an old servant entered, bringing the two companions their clothes, dried and brushed, together with some bread and some milk for breakfast.

Julius thanked her, and asked in whose house they were. The old woman replied that they were at the manse of Landeck, at Pastor Schreiber's.

And, whilst setting the room in order, the good woman, who was evidently loquacious, went on to say:

The pastor's wife had died fifteen years ago, in giving birth to Mademoiselle Christiane. Then, three years back, the pastor had sustained another loss, in the death of his eldest daughter, Marguerite, and, now he lived alone with his daughter, Mademoiselle Christiane, and his grandson Lothario, Marguerite's child.

The worthy pastor had just that moment started, with Christiane, for the village church, where his religious duties called him. But he would be back by mid-day, the dinner-hour, and would then see his guests.

"But," said Samuel, "who then conducted us hither yesterday?"

"Ah!" replied the servant, "it was Gretchen!"

"Good! Now explain to us who is Gretchen?"

"Gretchen? Why the goat herd."

"The goat herd," said Julius, "That, of course, explains things in general, and the goat in particular. And where is she now?"

"Oh! she has gone back to the mountain. In the winter, or when the weather is too stormy in summer, she cannot spend the night in her wood hut, so comes to sleep in the parsonage, where she has a bedroom next to mine, but she never stays here long. She is a queer creature. She feels stifled between four walls; air is as necessary to her as to her animals."

"But by what right did she bring us here?" asked Julius.

"It was not by virtue of right but of duty," replied the servant, "and my master the pastor, each time that he sees her, charges her to bring hither every weary or belated traveller she may come across; because there is no inn anywhere near, and he says that the priest's house is the house of God, and the house of God is the house of all."

The old woman went out. The young men breakfasted, dressed, and went down to the garden.

"Let us take a turn before dinner," said Samuel.

"No" Julius replied, "I am tired."

And he sat down on a bench shaded by a climbing honeysuckle.

"Tired?" said Samuel. "You are only just out of bed." Then immediately he burst into a laugh.

"Ah! yes, I understand; that is the bench where Christiane was sitting. Ah! my poor Julius! already smitten!"

Julius got up, quite confused.

"As a matter of fact," he rejoined, "we may just as well walk about. There will be plenty of time to sit down. Let us go and look at the garden."

And he began to talk about the flowers, and to admire the laying out of the garden, as if anxious to turn the conversation from the subject introduced by Samuel, that is to say, from the bench and the pastor's daughter. He did not know why, but the name of Christiane on Samuel's mocking lips began to jar upon him.

They strolled about thus for an hour. At the end of the garden was the orchard. But at this season of the year the orchard was likewise a garden. The apple trees and peach trees were masses of white and pink blossom.

"What are you thinking about?" Samuel said suddenly to Julius, who, for the last few moments, had been dreamy and silent.

We dare not assert that Julius was perfectly sincere in his reply, however he answered: "About my father."

"Your father! And à propos of what have your thoughts flown to that illustrious man of science, I pray you?"

"Why! à propos of the fact that to-morrow at this hour he may have no son."

"Oh! my dear fellow, do not let us make our wills beforehand, eh?" said Samuel. "To-morrow, I shall be in quite as much danger as you. But to-morrow will be quite time enough to think of it. You cannot believe to what extent the imagination weakens the will. In that lies the difference between men of sound intellect and fools. As for us, let us not anticipate."

"Do not be afraid!" replied Julius. "Neither my will, nor my courage will fail to-morrow in the face of danger."

"I do not doubt it, Julius. But do cheer up. If I mistake not, I see the pastor returning with his daughter. Come! come! I fancy your smile returns with them. Can it have gone with them to church?"

"You tiresome fellow!" said Julius.

The pastor and Christiane were, in fact, on their way back. Christiane walked straight into the house; the pastor hastened towards his guests.

CHAPTER IV

FIVE HOURS IN FIVE MINUTES

PASTOR SCHREIBER had the straightforward honest look of a German pastor accustomed to practise what he preached. He was a man of forty-five or thereabouts, consequently still young. His benevolent face was grave and sad. The seriousness arose from his calling; the sadness, from the death of his wife and daughter. It was evident that time had failed to heal his wound, and the ceaseless shadow of human regret warred on his brow with the comforting light of Christian hope.

He shook hands with the young men, enquired how they had slept, and thanked them for having sought shelter at his house.

A moment later the dinner-bell rang.

"Let us join my daughter, gentlemen," said the pastor. "I will lead the way."

"He does not ask our names," Samuel whispered in Julius' ear. "Needless, then, to tell him. Yours is perhaps too illustrious for the little one's modesty, and mine too Jewish for the old man's piety."

"So be it," said Julius, "let us give ourselves princely airs and assume an incognito."

They went into the dining-room, where they found Christiane and her nephew. Christiane bowed to the two young men with shy and shrinking grace.

They sat down at a square table simply but plentifully spread; the pastor between the two friends, Christiane opposite to him, and separated from Julius by the child.

The meal was at first a silent one. Julius, embarrassed in the presence of Christiane, said nothing. Christiane seemed able to attend to no one but the child, whom she tended like a young mother, and who called her sister. The conversation was almost entirely sustained by the pastor and Samuel. The pastor was delighted to receive the students.

"I, too, have been 'studiosus,'" said he. "A student's life was a happy one in those days."

"It is a trifle more dramatic nowadays," said Samuel looking at Julius.

"Ah!" continued the pastor, "that was the best time of my life. Since then, I have paid dearly for the happiness of those early days. I looked hopefully on life then. Now, it is quite the reverse. Oh! I do not say this to sadden you, my young friends; as you see, I speak almost cheerfully. And, whatever happens, I hope I may be permitted to remain on earth until I have seen my Christiane happy in the home of her forefathers . . ."

"Father, father!" . . . Christiane interrupted in a tone of tender reproach.

"You are right, my wise fairy," said the pastor, "let us talk of something else. Do you know that, thank God, the storm of last night has spared nearly all my beloved plants."

"Are you a botanist?" asked Samuel.

"Somewhat," the pastor replied with a certain pride. "Do you happen to be one too, sir?"

"In my leisure moments," the young man carelessly replied.

Then, allowing the pastor to enter into a dissertation on his favourite studies, Samuel suddenly unmasked, so to speak, a profound and daring knowledge of the subject, amused himself in bewildering the worthy man by his new thoughts and hitherto undreamt-of notions, without departing from his polite, cold and somewhat mocking manner, and without appearing to wish to do so, completely put to rout, by the superiority of his true science, the somewhat superficial, and above all somewhat superannuated, learning of the pastor.

Meanwhile Julius and Christiane, who up to the present had remained silent, only looking stealthily at each other, began to grow a little more sociable.

Lothario served at first as a link between them. Julius was not yet venturesome enough to address Christiane himself, but he put questions to the child which it was impossible for Lothario to answer. Then the child questioned Christiane, who replied to Lothario and to Julius. And Julius rejoiced that the young girl's thoughts should reach him through the medium of those pure lips so dear to her. At dessert, thanks to that quick and trustful unreserve which is the great charm of children, the three were already good friends.

So, when they rose from the table and went into the garden to drink coffee under the trees, a frown crossed Julius' brow on seeing Samuel approach them, and a pang shot through his heart that he should come and disturb the commencement of their sweet intimacy. The pastor had insisted on going himself to fetch his best old brandy.

It was not for want of boldness that he sinned, this cold, sardonic Samuel, and Julius felt very indignant on seeing the quiet, self-satisfied look which he bent on sweet Christiane, as he said:—"We must ask your forgiveness, Mademoiselle, for having, this morning, so foolishly disturbed the lesson which you were giving your little nephew."

"Oh!" she said, "I had finished."

"I could not suppress an exclamation. Do you know that, because of her dress, her goat and the lightning, we were almost inclined to believe that the young girl who introduced us here yesterday was a witch? We fell asleep under that impression, and in the morning, on opening our window, we find the goat changed into an adorable child, and the witch——

"Was I!" said Christiane, with a joyous and, it must be confessed, slightly coquettish, pout.

And, turning towards Julius, who affected a reserved air:—"And you, sir, did you too take me for a witch?" asked she.

"Eh!" said Julius, "well, you see it is not natural to be so beautiful."

Christiane, who had smiled at Samuel's words, blushed at Julius' speech.

Confused at having said so much, Julius hurriedly turned to the child.

"Lothario, would you like us to take you to the University?" said he.

"Sister," Lothario asked Christiane, "what is the University?"

"It is a place which is supposed to teach you everything," the pastor, who had just returned, said with alacrity.

The child turned gravely to Julius.

"I need not go with you because my sister is a university to me. She knows how to read and write, besides French, music and Italian. I shall never leave her, never in all my life."

"Alas! you are luckier than we are, my little man," said Samuel, "because the hour has come for us to set off again, Julius."

"What!" exclaimed the pastor, "you will not give us even this one day! not stay to supper to-night!"

"A thousand thanks!" rejoined Samuel, "but it is absolutely imperative for us to be in Heidelberg this evening."

"Come! there are no lectures, and no roll-call in the evening."

"No! it is even a more serious duty that calls us, as Julius is well aware."

"Let us consider the matter," said the pastor. "Heidelberg is not more than seven or eight miles from Landeck. So to rest your horses and avoid the heat of the day you can easily arrange not to leave here until four o'clock. Even then, you will reach the town before nightfall, I assure you."

"Impossible. Considering the nature of the business that calls us there, we ought instead to have left earlier, am I not right, Julius?"

"Really!" murmured Christiane in a low voice, raising her lovely blue eyes to Julius' face.

Julius, who up to the present had said nothing, was powerless to resist the sweet interrogation.

"Look here, Samuel," said he, "let us not appear ungrateful for our host's kindness. We can leave at four o'clock punctually."

Samuel looked from Julius to the young girl with a wicked glance.

"Since you wish it, I have nothing further to say," said he to Julius with a sardonic smile.

"That's right!" exclaimed the pastor, "and now here is the programme for the day. It will take us until three o'clock to inspect my collections and my garden. After that the children and I will see you on your way as far as the crossroads of Neckarsteinach. I have a strong, careful lad who will lead your horses as far. You will see! the road, which appeared to you so horrible in the storm and darkness, is beautiful in the sunshine. And probably, we shall come across your so-called witch, on the way. For she really is one in a certain sense, but in the most Christianlike way imaginable; she is an innocent, God-fearing child."

"Ah! I would be glad to see her again by daylight," replied Samuel. "May we inspect your collection of plants, sir," said he to the pastor, rising.

And, in passing Julius, he breathed in his ear:

"I am going to look after the father, and sound him on Tournefort and Linnæus. Am I a devoted friend?"

And in fact he monopolised the father, leaving Julius alone for some moments with Christiane and Lothario. Now they felt more at ease with one another, and ventured to look at, and speak to each other.

The impression that Christiane had made upon Julius that morning, engraved itself more and more deeply upon him. Nothing fresher nor more animated than this sweet face in which could be read as in an open book all the innocence of maidenhood. Christiane's glance was clear as water from a spring, and was the reflex of a warm trusting heart. Beautiful and good, hers was a nature as transparent as this day in May.

Lothario's presence imparted both innocence and freedom to this sweet intercourse. Christiane showed Julius her flowers, her bees, her poultry-yard, her music, her books, that is to say, all her calm and simple life. Then she questioned him about himself.

"How comes it?" she said once, "how comes it that you, who appear so quiet, and so gentle, should have, as your friend, a man so proud and cynical?"

It had not escaped her notice that, when unobserved, Samuel laughed at her father's simplicity, and this had at once made her dislike him.

Julius thought that Goethe's Marguerite had said something very like this of Mephistopheles in the delicious garden scene. But already was he convinced that Faust's Marguerite could not compare with his Christiane. By degrees, as they chatted together, he remarked that the girl's frankness and charm concealed a fund of good sense and firmness due probably to the sadness of her motherless childhood. The child was fast merging into the woman.

Neither of them could repress a frank movement of surprise, when the pastor and Samuel coming back to them, reminded them that it was three o'clock and time to start.

Five hours seem like five minutes to the happy and forgetful time-keeper of the heart's first throbs of love.

CHAPTER V

THE FLOWERS AND HERBS MANIFEST DISTRUST OF SAMUEL GELB

THEY had therefore to set out on their way. But, at least, an hour yet was theirs in which to be together.

Julius was glad at the thought. He relied upon continuing, as they went along, the conversation which he and Christiane had begun; but he was mistaken. Christiane instinctively felt that it were best for her and Julius not to be too much together. She slipped her hand through her father's arm, who was still absorbed in his discussion with Samuel. Julius grew sad and walked behind them.

They went up a pleasant ascent through a charming wood where the rays of the sun laughed through the leafy shadows. The peacefulness of the afternoon was welcomed by the amorous notes of the nightingale.

Julius, as we said, held aloof, already vexed with Christiane.

He made this attempt:

"Lothario, come and see this," said he to the pretty child, who walked beside Christiane, holding on to her hand and taking three steps for one.

Lothario ran up to his old friend of two hours' standing. Julius showed him a dragon-fly that had settled on a bush, slender, quivering, splendid. The child gave a cry of delight.

"What a pity," said Julius, "that Christiane does not see it."

"Sister," said Lothario, "come quick!"

And as Christiane made no response, well aware that it was not the child who had called her, Lothario sprang after her, pulled at her dress, compelled her to loose her father's arm and triumphantly brought her to see the insect's beautiful wings.

The dragon-fly had flown away, but Christiane had come.

"You called me for nothing," said Christiane and she went back to her father's side.

Julius employed this subterfuge several times. He would make Lothario admire all the butterflies and all the flowers along their way, invariably expressing regret that Christiane was not there to enjoy their beauty too. Each time, Lothario would immediately run after Christiane, and comes he must, so insistent was he. Thus Julius made use of the child to steal a few minutes' conversation with the young girl.

He succeeded too in making her accept, through the little hands of Lothario, his innocent accomplice, a magnificent wild rose just freshly blown.

But Christiane always returned to her father's side.

Yet she could not feel angry with Julius for his longing and his perseverance; had she not, the sweet gentle girl, to fight against her own heart not to stay?

"Listen," she said, in a childlike tone which enraptured him; "listen, it would be absolutely impolite, on my part, to speak to no one but you, and my father would wonder if I were never with him or your companion. But you will soon come back, will you not? We will go for walks again with my father and Lothario; and see, if you like, we will visit the Mouth of Hell and the ruins of the Castle of Eberbach. Most noble views, Herr Julius, which it was impossible for you to see at night, but you will enjoy seeing them by daylight, and then we can talk, as we go along."

They arrived at the cross-roads. The horses that were to meet them there, under the guidance of Herr Schreiber's young servant, had not yet come.

"Let us walk a few steps in this direction," said the pastor, "and perhaps we may find Gretchen in her hut."

In a very short time, they perceived the little goat-herd. Her cabin was mid-way up the mountain-side, in the shelter of the rock. Around Gretchen, a dozen goats were browsing, restless, suspicious, clinging wherever a hole was to be found, and only nibbling at the grass which grew in the marshy ground; in fact, true Virgilian goats, hanging on to the rock and browsing bitter herbs.

In the full light of day, Gretchen was even more weird and more beautiful than in the gleam of lightning. A sombre flame illumined her dark eyes. Her hair, black as her eyes, was interwoven with strange flowers. At this particular moment, she sat huddled together, her chin in her hand, as if a prey to some absorbing train of thought. Her attitude, her headgear, her whole appearance had much of the gipsy, a little of the mad girl. Christiane and the pastor came up to her. She did not appear to see them.

"Well!" said the pastor, "what ails you, Gretchen? I pass along, and you do not hasten to me as usual? Evidently you do not want me to thank you for the guests you brought to my home last night?"

Gretchen did not rise, but sighing deeply, said in a sad voice:

"You do well to thank me to-day; you might not do so to-morrow."

Samuel threw a scornful glance at the goat-herd.

"Evidently you repent having brought us?" said he.

"You in particular," was her reply. "But he also," she went on, looking at Christiane with an air of sorrowful affection, "he also, has not brought happiness . . ."

"And how have you found that out?" asked Samuel with his accustomed sneer.

"By the night-shade and the withered clover."

"Ah!" Samuel said to the pastor, "Gretchen too studies botany?"

"Yes," replied Christiane's father; "she professes to read the present and the future in plants."

"I believe," said the goat-herd gravely, "that plants and flowers, not having done the harm that men have, are more worthy that God should talk to them. Because of their innocence, they know everything. I have lived so much with them, that they have ended by telling me some of their secrets."

And Gretchen relapsed into her gloomy abstraction. Nevertheless, although apparently absorbed in her thoughts, she went on, as if talking to herself, and yet loud enough to be heard by all.

"Yes, I have brought ill-luck to the roof that is dear to me. The pastor saved my mother, God grant I have not lost him his daughter. My mother wandered about the country fortune-telling, carrying me on her back, without a husband, without religion, without anyone on earth or in heaven to care for her. The pastor took us in, fed us, taught us. Thanks to him, my mother died a Christian. Well! mother, you see, he who gave paradise to your soul, and bread to your daughter, I show my gratitude to him by bringing men of ill-luck into his house. Ungrateful wretch that I am! I should have guessed what sort of men they were from the manner in which I met them. I should have been distrustful of them after what I heard them say. The storm brought them and they brought the storm."

"Poor child!" said the pastor. "She will certainly go mad, if she is not so already."

"Has she frightened you, Mademoiselle?" Julius said to Christiane.

"No, but her words impressed me. She is in one of her visionary moods," replied the young girl.

"Well!" said Samuel, "for my own part, whether she be awake or asleep, by day or by night, in sunshine or in storm, I think her both charming and amusing."

Poor Gretchen! the inhabitants of the parsonage treated her as the inhabitants of Troy treated Cassandra.

A sound of steps aroused the spectators of this singular scene from the different emotions which it had engendered. The horses had arrived.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH THE SCENE CHANGES FROM JOY TO JUBILATION, WHICH TO SOME IS A DIFFERENT THING ALTOGETHER

THE moment of parting had come. The farewell words must be spoken. The pastor obtained from Julius and Samuel a promise that they would return to the parsonage at the earliest opportunity.

"You do not study on Sundays," Christiane ventured to say; and on this remark, it was agreed that the two young men would return the very next Sunday; which meant but three whole days' absence.

When the students were in the saddle, Julius looked at Christiane with eyes that tried not to be sad.

And at the same time his gaze dwelt enviously on the wild rose that he had given her through Lothario, and which he would gladly have taken back, now that she had worn it.

But she seemed not to notice it; only, in giving him her hand in farewell, she said, with a bright smile:

"Till Sunday, for certain?"

"Oh, yes, surely," he replied in a tone which made the young girl smile and Samuel laugh. "Unless some misfortune should befall me," he added in an undertone.

But though he had spoken so low, Christiane heard the words.

"Why, what misfortune can befall you in three days?" she asked, turning pale.

"Who knows!" said Julius, half in jest, half in earnest.

"But if you are anxious for me to escape all these perils, you, who are an angel, have but to offer up a few prayers to God for me; to-morrow, for instance, at the service."

"To-morrow? at the service?" repeated Christiane, evidently impressed. "Do you hear what Monsieur Julius asks, father?"

"I have always accustomed you to pray for our guests, my child," said the pastor.

"Now I am invulnerable," said Julius, "armed with the prayer of a seraph; all, now, that I lack is the fairy talisman."

His eyes were still fastened on the white rose.

"Come," rejoined Samuel, "it is high time to go, were it only to put an end to all these imaginary perils. Do not all men run into dangers every day, from which they escape? Besides I am there, I, whom Gretchen imagines, I believe, to be the devil in disguise, and the devil can do much in human affairs. And after all, what matters! the real end and aim of mortals, is it not, to die?"

"To die!" cried Christiane, finding her voice again. "Oh, yes, Herr Julius, I will pray for you, although I do not think you are in any danger of death!"

"Now, adieu, adieu," said Samuel impatiently. "Come along, Julius, come along."

"Good-bye, my big friend," cried Lothario.

"Why," said Christiane, "will you not give your flower to your big friend as a keepsake?"

And she placed the wild rose in the child's hand.

"But I am too small!" said Lothario, vainly holding up his hand.

Then Christiane raised the child in her arms and carried him close up to Julius' horse, and Julius took the wild rose.

It was acceptable even from the hand of Lothario.

"Thank you and farewell!" cried he deeply moved.

And, waving a last farewell to Christiane and her father, he put spurs to his horse, as if to overcome his emotion, and galloped off.

Samuel followed. Another minute, and the two friends were already far away.

But when they had gone about fifty yards, Julius turned in his saddle, and saw Christiane, looking back and waving him adieu.

To both, this departure was even now a separation, and each felt that he left with the other a part of himself.

The young men rode for a quarter of a league, urging on their horses and without exchanging a word.

The road was charming. On one side mountain and forest; on the other the Neckar, reflecting in its calm waters the serene beauty of the sky. The sun, already tempered by the approach of evening, bathed the trees in a rosy light.

"What a smiling landscape," said Samuel, slackening speed.

"And we are leaving it for noisy streets and smoke-filled taverns," replied Julius. "Never have I felt so much as now how little suited I am to all your orgies, all your quarrels, all your tumults. I was meant for a quiet life, for peaceful joys . . . "

"And for Christiane! You forget the one essential. Confess that for you the village means the village maiden. Well! You are not far wrong. The girl is pretty and so is the witch. And I, like you, fully intend to revisit the neighbourhood. But the fact of our having discovered this sweet little bird's nest is no reason why we should be sad. On the contrary, let us decide about to-morrow, and we can think of Sunday afterwards. If we survive we shall have plenty of time to compose sonnets and even to fancy ourselves in love; but until then let us be men."

They stopped a short time at Neckarsteinach to drink a bottle of beer and to rest their horses. Then they hastily pursued their way, and it was still daylight when they reached Heidelberg.

In all the streets, and at the windows of all the houses, nothing but students were to be seen. On recognizing Samuel and Julius, they all bowed. Samuel seemed to be the object of the deepest respect. Caps of every colour, yellow, green, red, white, were raised respectfully as he passed.

But on reaching the principal street, respect gave place to enthusiasm, and the entry became a triumph.

Students, of whatever grade, "Mossy-Pates," as well as simple "Finches," "Golden Foxes," as also "Mules,"[1] flock to doors and windows, some waving their caps in the air, others presenting arms with billiard cues, everyone shouting, at the top of his voice, the celebrated song;

"Who cometh down the mountain side?"

terminated by the interminable "*Viva, viva, viva, vallera!*"

To all these marks of honour Samuel responded but by a slight inclination of the head. And seeing that these demonstrations of joy increased Julius' melancholy:

"Silence!" cried he, "you make my friend's head ache. Come! enough! do you take us for 'Camels' or 'Philistines,' that you deafen us with this uproar. Holla! stand back, or it will be impossible for us to dismount."

But the crowd would not fall back. Each one vied with the other as to which should secure the bridle of Samuel's horse, so as to have the honour of leading it to the stable.

One student, of quite thirty years, who must have been an "Oldster," if not a "Mossy Pate," rushed out of the hotel, waved back the "Finches" and the "Freshmen," who surrounded Samuel, and indulging in prodigious leaps and bounds:

"Hands down," cried he. "Ah, good-day, Samuel! Good-day, my noble senior. Hurrah!"

"Good-day, Trichter; good-day, my dear 'Pet Fox,'" said Samuel.

"You have returned at last, noble sir!" resumed Trichter. "Ah, time and existence have hung heavily on our hands during your absence! However, here you are! *Vivallerallera!* . . . "

"Good Trichter, good! I appreciate your welcome. But permit me to alight. There. Let Lewald take my horse. Why do you make a wry face?"

"Why, you see!" said Trichter, in a piqued tone, "such a favour as that . . "

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[1] Names of the different degrees in the students' hierarchy. Here, as in every other detail concerning the customs of student life in Germany, which may perhaps appear somewhat strange in other countries, we wish to impress upon the reader that we are relating facts, not fabricating.

"Yes, Lewald is only one of the 'Boys,' I know. But, it is advisable that, now and then, kings should do something for the people. You may come with Julius and me into the *Commerz* House!"

What Samuel called the *Commerz* House was the Inn of the Swan, the principal tavern in Heidelberg, at the door of which he had alighted.

"Why are so many people here?" Samuel asked Trichter. "Was I expected?"

"This merry-making is in honour of the re-opening of term after the Easter vacation," said Trichter; "you are here just in time. There is going to be a 'Foxes' ' *Commerz*."

"Then let us go to it," said Samuel.

The landlord of the inn, having been apprised of Samuel's arrival, at this moment hastened forward, with a proud yet humble air.

"Oh! oh! you are in no hurry!" said Samuel.

"I crave your pardon," replied the landlord, "the fact is this evening we are expecting H.R.H. Prince Charles Augustus, the son of the Elector of Baden, who is passing through Heidelberg on his way to Stuttgart."

"Well! what is that to me? He is only a prince; I am a king!"

Julius approached Samuel and whispered:

"Does the presence of the prince alter in any way our arrangement for to-night and to-morrow?" he asked.

"On the contrary."

"Very well. Then let us go in."

And Samuel, Julius and Trichter entered the disorderly entertainment which Trichter had called the "Foxes'" ***Commerz.***

CHAPTER VII

THE FUCHSENCOMMERZ

WHEN the door of the immense hall opened, Julius at first could see nothing, hear nothing.

The smoke blinded him, the noise deafened him. Of course, everyone was in the same plight. But one became inured little by little, and, after some time, one was able vaguely to distinguish objects amid the clouds of tobacco. Then the enormous lustres gleamed out feebly like street lamps in a fog, and finally, in the dim light, you grew aware of appearances like human forms moving about.

Hurrah and *viva vallera!* There were students in that hall, quite young fellows, who could have given points to a Chaldean sage for the length of their beards; there were moustaches that would have been the envy of a weeping-willow. There were to be seen some of the most fantastic costumes imaginable, Faust caps, with a Huron feather, monster ties, which sometimes all but hid the wearer's face; massive gold chains round bare necks; above all there were glasses enough to scare a waiter and pipes to strike consternation into a factory chimney.

Smoke, rivers of wine, a din of music, deafening choruses, waltzes, resounding kisses on the rosy cheeks of pretty, breathless girls, who burst into peals of laughter, all these sounds rose in a strange diabolical pandemonium of noise.

Samuel was greeted in the hall as he had been outside. Immediately, his pipe and his gigantic royal "Römer" brimming over, were placed before him.

"What have you there?" said he.

"Strong beer."

"Come! do I look like a student from Jena? Throw that away and bring me punch."

The beaker was filled with punch. It held more than a pint. He emptied it at one draught. Cheers thundered out from one end of the hall to the other.

"You are childish," said Samuel.

He resumed:

"But I see with regret that the waltz lacks animation and the songs zest. Strike up, then!" cried he to the orchestra.

And going up to a "golden fox," who was dancing with the prettiest girl in the room, he took her from him without ceremony, and began to waltz.

At once the whole hall became silent, attentive, absorbed. For in Samuel's dancing there was something fantastic yet finished, which held the spectators spellbound. He began in stately measure, gliding into an amorous tender movement, unexpectedly interrupted by an abrupt gesture. Then he whirled round with a rapidity incredible, impassioned, unbridled, all-powerful. Then suddenly, in the midst of this insane joy, he stopped and passed straight from the wild frenzy of enthusiasm to cold disdain; an ironical smile curved his lips. At times his expression was one of unutterable sadness, which aroused pity in the onlookers; but the next moment this was crushed back and stifled by some ludicrous movement, or a shrug of the shoulders on his part. Or else his melancholy changed to bitterness—a sinister fire flashed from his eyes and his partner quivered in his arms like a dove in the talons of a vulture.

A unique dance which in a second transported one from heaven to hell, and at the sight of which one knew not whether to laugh, to cry or to tremble.

He brought it to a close with a paroxysm of whirling round and round, so contagious, so fascinating, that the other waltzers, who until then had remained gazing at them, were carried into the vortex, and, for the next quarter of an hour, the hall was converted into a hurricane.

Then Samuel quietly sat down, not a sign of moisture on his brow. He merely asked for a second bowl of punch.

Julius had taken no part in the bacchanal. Drowned in this sea of noise, his thoughts were at the manse of Landeck. Strange thing! in all this tempest of hoarse sounds, he heard but the sweet voice of a maiden teaching a little child his letters under the trees.

The landlord came up to Samuel and whispered something in his ear.

Prince Charles Augustus craved permission of the King of the Students to join in the *Fuchsencommerz*.

" Let him enter," said Samuel.

At the entrance of the prince the " studiosi " raised their caps. Samuel, alone, excepted. He extended his hand to the prince and said:

" Welcome, my cousin."

And he offered him a seat beside himself and Julius.

Just then, a little maid who accompanied herself on the guitar, had been singing one of Koener's songs, and was making a collection. She stopped in front of Charles-Augustus, who turned round intending to ask some member of his suite for money. But no one had been permitted to enter with him. Then he turned to Samuel.

" Will you give something for me, sire ? "

" With pleasure."

Samuel drew out his purse.

" Here," said he to the gipsy, " this I give you for myself, the king, five gold frederics, and this is for the prince, one kreutzer."

A kreutzer is worth a little over a farthing.

A frenzy of applause shook the hall to its foundations. The young prince smiled and joined in the applause.

He left the hall a few minutes later. Almost immediately Samuel made a sign to Julius:

" It is time," he said in a whisper.

Julius nodded and slipped out of the room.

The orgie was at its height. The dust and tobacco smoke had made the atmosphere more impenetrable than a December fog. It was now impossible to distinguish who went in or out.

Samuel got up, and in his turn glided outside.

CHAPTER VIII

SAMUEL IS ALMOST MOVED TO ASTONISHMENT

IT was now midnight; in all German towns and even at the Universities, everybody by this time has been asleep for a good two hours. Not a soul was awake in all Heidelberg, except at the *Foxes' Commerz.*

Samuel walked towards the quay, choosing the least frequented streets, and turning round at intervals to satisfy himself that he was not followed. In this way he reached the Neckar, loitered up and down its banks for some time; then, turning abruptly to the right, he climbed the ascent which leads to the ruins of the Castle of Heidelberg.

At the first stage of that flight of steps that climbs the hill, a man suddenly emerged from a thicket of trees and stood in front of Samuel.

" Where are you going ? "

" I am going to the heights leading up to God," replied Samuel, in accordance with the prescribed formula.

" Pass on," said the man.

Samuel continued his ascent, and had soon scaled the last flight.

When he arrived at the precincts of the castle, a second watchman challenged him at a postern.

"What are you doing here at this hour?"

"I am doing . . ." said Samuel. Then, instead of finishing the password, he began to chuckle; acting on one of those foolish impulses which crossed his mind at times. "You want to know what I am doing here at such an hour? Confound it all! I am taking a walk."

The watchman started; and, as if in a rage, he knocked noisily at the wall with a heavily weighted stick, at the same time saying to Samuel:

"I advise you to return to your home, neither the hour nor the place is suited to a walk."

Samuel shrugged his shoulders.

"It suits my fancy to admire the ruins by moonlight. Who are you that you should prevent my doing so?"

"I am one of the Custodians of the Castle, and our orders are that no one be allowed admittance after ten o'clock."

"Your orders are for the Philistines," said Samuel, "but I am a student."

And he made as if he would push the watchman aside in order to enter.

"Not one step more, on your peril!" cried the man thrusting his hand into his bosom.

Samuel thought he saw the gleam of a blade. At the same moment, warned by the blows of the fellow's stick, five or six men silently drew near, gliding behind the brushwood.

"Oh! pardon me," Samuel said then with a laugh, "perhaps you are he to whom I have to reply: "I am doing the work of them who sleep."

The watchman drew a deep breath and replaced his knife in his bosom. The others stepped back.

"It was time, my friend," said the watchman. "One second more and you would have been a dead man."

"Oh! I would have had a fight for it. But I sincerely congratulate you. I see that we shall be well guarded."

"Never mind, comrade, you are bold to play with such things."

"I have played with many others."

He passed in and entered the courtyard. The moon shone full on the façade of the ancient Castle of Friedrich IV. and Otto Heinrich. The two richly sculptured frontages, the one covered with divinities and chimeras, the other with palatines and emperors, presented a magnificent spectacle when thus illumined by the light of the moon.

But Samuel was in no mood to admire sculptures. He contented himself with flinging an obscene word at Venus, and a gesture of defiance at Charlemagne, as he passed, and went straight to the entrance of the ruin.

A third sentinel barred the way.

"Who goes there?"

"One of those who avenge the avengers."

"Follow me," said the sentry.

Samuel followed his guide through the brushwood and the ruins, stumbling more than once against the fallen stones, which lay half buried in the high grasses.

When he had traversed these extensive remains of a great palace and a great history, when he had trampled many a ceiling which kings had seen above their heads, the guide stopped, opened a low door, and disclosed a cavity in the ground.

"Descend," said he, "and do not move till some one comes to fetch you."

He shut the door, and Samuel found himself in a path inclining downwards where not a ray of light could penetrate; then, the slope ceased. Just as Samuel emerged into a sort of deep cave, and before his eyes had grown used to the gloom, he felt a hand press his own, and heard Julius' voice say:

"You are late. They are taking their seats. Let us listen and observe."

Samuel became accustomed to the darkness, and was then able to distinguish a few feet away, several human forms in a kind of chamber enclosed by a swelling of the ground and by shrubs. There, seated on blocks of stone, on remains of steps, on fragments of statues, were seven masked men; three on the right, three on the left, the seventh in the centre, and raised above the others.

A stream of moonlight, filtering through the chinks of the rock, illumined feebly this mysterious conclave.

"Bring forward the two champions," said one of the seven. But he who spoke was not the man who appeared to be the president—this latter remained silent and motionless.

Samuel was about to advance when two young men, preceded by an assessor, entered.

"Samuel and Julius recognised two of their fellow-students at the University.

One of the Seven, he who had requested that they should be brought in, questioned them.

"Your name is Otto Dormagen?" said he to the one.

"Yes."

"And you, Franz Ritter?" he asked the other.

"Yes."

"You both belong to the Tugendbund?" (Guild of Virtue).

"Yes."

"As such, you are aware that you owe us absolute obedience?"

"We acknowledge it."

"You belong to the University of Heidelberg and to the 'Burgenschaft, the Students' Guild'; therefore you are acquainted with two of your number who hold high degrees at the University, Samuel Gelb and Julius von Hermelinfeld?"

Samuel and Julius looked at each other in the darkness.

"We know them," the students replied.

"You both have a good reputation for fencing, and have always been fortunate in all such duels as give you students an appetite for breakfast?"

"Quite true."

"Well! these are our orders: To-morrow, without further delay and on no matter what pretext, you are to challenge Julius von Hermelinfeld and Samuel Gelb, and fight a duel with them."

Samuel bent over towards Julius.

"Upon my word," said he, "the scene is not devoid of originality. But why the deuce do they make us spectators of it?"

"Will you obey?" asked the masked man.

Otto Dormagen and Franz Ritter were silent and seemed to hesitate. Otto attempted to answer.

"The fact is," said he, "Samuel and Julius are also skilled in the use of the rapier."

"The flatterer!" Samuel murmured.

"It is for that reason," the voice went on, "that we have chosen two such fencers as you."

"If one wishes to be sure of one's aim," said Franz, "the dagger would be better than the sword."

"So I think," said Samuel.

The man with the mask answered:

"It is necessary to give a natural explanation of the wound. A students' quarrel is an everyday occurrence which will arouse no suspicion."

The two "studiosi" still seemed undecided.

"Remember," added the voice, "that to-day is the first of June, in ten days, the great assembly, and that it rests with us to demand reward or punishment for you."

"I will obey," said Franz Ritter.

"I will obey," said Otto Dormagen.

"That is well. Good courage and good luck. You may retire."

Franz and Otto went out, preceded by the assessor who had introduced them. The Seven did not utter a word. Five minutes after, the assessor returned and said: "They are out of the precincts."

"Bring forward the two other champions," said the man with the mask who spoke in the name of the Seven.

The assessor walked towards the place where Julius and Samuel waited.

"Come," said he.

And Samuel and Julius found themselves, in turn, in this strange council hall, in presence of the seven masked men.

CHAPTER IX

SAMUEL ALMOST LOSES HIS EQUANIMITY

THE same masked man who had questioned Franz and Otto, addressed them:

"You are called Julius von Hermelinfeld?" said he to Julius.

"Yes."

"And you Samuel Gelb?"

"Yes."

"You belong to Tugendbund, and, as such, you owe us obedience?"

"You speak truly."

"You have seen the faces and heard the names of the two students who have just left here. You know what they have promised for to-morrow?"

"They have promised the bear's skin," said Samuel, who would have joked with God Almighty Himself.

"They will challenge you. You will

fight. You are the two most skilled fencers at the University of Heidelberg. It is unnecessary to kill them. You will content yourselves with wounding them seriously. Will you obey?"

"I shall obey," replied Julius.

"That is well," said the voice. "But you, Samuel Gelb, are you reflecting?"

"Well! Yes," replied Samuel; "I am reflecting that what you are asking us to do is precisely what you asked of the other two, and I am trying to understand what can be your object in making your own men fight against each other. Until now, I had thought that young Germany was not Old England, and that the Tugendbund had been instituted with other aims than those of amusing itself with cock-fights."

"It is not a question of amusement," retorted the masked man, "it is a question of punishment. We owe you no explanation; but it is right and just that our indignation should animate you. We have to rid ourselves of two false brothers who are betraying us, and the Guild confers upon you the honour of placing its sword in your hands."

"In ours or in theirs?" questioned Samuel. . . . What guarantee have we that it is not us you want to be rid of?"

"Your conscience. We want to chastise two traitors; you yourselves best know if this applies to you."

"Oh! is it not possible for you to think us traitors without our being such?"

"Brother of little faith! If it were against you that we had prepared this duel, we should not have arranged for you to be present when your adversaries were interviewed; we should have given them our orders in secret; they would have insulted you; you are brave, you would have fought, and would not have known that we had had any hand in the affair. On the contrary, we have warned you ten days in advance. You were spending your vacation in your native town of Frankfort when the Traveller of the Main came to summon you for the 20th of May, charging you to practice fencing, as you would have to sustain, that very day, a mortal combat. That is a strange fashion of laying a snare for you!"

"But," persisted Samuel, who, under all feigned doubts, concealed a bitter secret thought, "but if Franz and Otto are traitors, why do you enjoin upon us only to wound them?"

The masked man hesitated a moment; then, after having by a sign consulted the other masked men:

"Listen, we want you to have full confidence in your cause and in our intentions. Therefore, and although the statutes exact of you passive and unquestioning obedience, we consent to answer you fully."

He went on:

"Seven months ago the Treaty of Vienna was signed. France is triumphant. In Germany, now, but two real powers exist: the Emperor Napoleon and the Tugendbund. Whilst the official cabinets, Austria and Prussia, bow their necks under the heel of the conqueror, the Guild pursues its work. Where the sword ceases, the knife begins. Friedrich Staps devoted his life to the cause, and his dagger came near to making Schönbrunn the altar of our independence. He is dead, but the blood of martyrs baptises ideas and engenders devotion. Napoleon knows this and keeps his eye upon us. He has us watched, Otto Dormagen and Franz Ritter are his, of this we have the certainty. They calculate on being present, by virtue of their right, at our general assembly on the 1st of June, in order to know and to sell the important resolutions which will then be communicated to the adepts. They must not be there. How to prevent them? By killing them you would say? But, they suppressed, Napoleon's police would replace them at all costs. Now, our interest is to know the spies in order to guard against them, and to deceive the enemy, if need be, by false disclosures. Therefore these must not die. A fairly deep wound will confine them to bed for some days, and, by the time they are well enough to be about again, the assembly will be over. We have even pursued our caution so far as to give them the rôle of aggressors. They will not have the least suspicion and will continue to keep France informed of such plans as we may think fit to confide to them. Now, do you understand why we advise you to wound them only?"

"And supposing they wound us?" Samuel still objected.

"Then," said the voice, "the laws on duelling compel them to keep in hiding for the first few days, and we have friends in a position to pursue them officially, and arrest them for at least a fortnight."

"Yes, in both cases, everything is advantageous — for the Tugendbund," rejoined Samuel.

The six masked men made a gesture of impatience. The only one who had, as yet, spoken, now addressed Samuel in a sterner tone.

"Samuel Gelb, we were quite willing to give you an explanation, when we might have given you nothing but a command. Enough words. Will you obey? Yes or no?"

"I do not say that I refuse," replied Samuel, "but," he added, betraying at last his real thought, "it is scarcely to be wondered at if I feel somewhat humiliated at the mean use which the Tugendbund makes of us. We are not deemed of much account, it seems to me, nor used very generously. I frankly admit it, I am vain enough to set a higher value upon myself than you seem to do. I, who rank first at Heidelberg, have only attained to the third degree in the Guild. I do not know who you are, and I am willing to believe that some among you are my superiors. I bow, if so desired, before him who has spoken, and whose voice, I believe, I have already heard this evening. But I maintain that I am at least the equal of more than one, in your superior grades. I therefore consider that you might have commissioned us with a more important undertaking, and that you employ the arm, where you might make use of the head. I have spoken. To-morrow I shall act."

Then he of the seven who was raised above the others, and who, so far, had neither spoken nor moved, addressed Samuel in a slow grave tone:

"Samuel Gelb," said he, "you are known to us. You have not been admitted into the Tugendbund without being put to the test. And who is to tell you that what you are now called upon to do is not another trial? We know you to be a man of superior intellect and strong determination. You can and you will. But you lack heart, faith, abnegation. Samuel Gelb, I fear that your wish to be one of us arose, not from a desire for the liberty of all, but for your own personal pride; not to serve our cause, but to make use of our power.

"Now, we are not struggling and suffering in order to gratify personal ambitions, we are fighting for a religion. Here, there is neither small nor great work; all contribute to the same end; the last is equal to the first. There are only believers, and the favoured ones are the martyrs. You are among the favoured ones, since you are chosen for a post of danger. When we ask a service at your hands, you say, 'Why,' you ought to have said 'Thank you.'

"Unhappy man! you have no faith in anything, except in yourself. We do not mistrust your valour, but we do mistrust your virtue. And perhaps that is why, up to the present, you have not advanced in the 'Guild of Virtue.'"

Samuel had listened with profound attention to this magisterial and dignified address.

He appeared impressed by it, as it was in quite a different tone; after a few moments silence, he answered:

"You are mistaken. If I have tried to impress you with a sense of my own worth, it was in the interest of the work, not of the workman. Henceforth, I shall let my actions speak for themselves. To-morrow, to begin with, I shall be your soldier, and nothing but your soldier."

"That is well!" said the president. "We rely upon you. You must rely upon God."

At a sign from the president, the man who had conducted Samuel and Julius into the room, led them away. They traversed the vaulted path they had ascended, picked their way through the ruins, repassed the three sentinels, and regained the slumbering town.

Half-an-hour later they were both in Samuel's room at the Inn of the Swan.

CHAPTER X

A QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH

THE cool air of a night in May came in at the open window, and the stars basked loverlike in the calm and peaceful shining of the moon.

Samuel and Julius, both silent, were still under the spell of the mysterious scene which they had lately witnessed.

Julius' one idea as to how this would affect Christiane, was really mingled, this time, with thoughts of his father. The reflections of Samuel had for their sole and only object,—Samuel.

Samuel was not easily disconcerted, but it is an undoubted fact that the President of the Supreme Council had for once impressed him. Who could this man be, he asked himself, who spoke with such high authority, chief of chiefs, head of a body which boasts of princes of the blood as members? It was not difficult for Samuel to imagine that the mask concealed an emperor.

"Oh! to become one day the chief of that sovereign and all-powerful association, what a dream! To hold in one's hands not only the paltry lives of a few individuals, but to play with the destinies of whole nations, what a 'rôle.'"

Thus Samuel communed with himself, and that is why the severe warning of the unknown president had so powerfully affected his mind.

Samuel became aware with terror and confusion of one thing; he, who thought he possessed every failing, at least all those of any consequence, found that one great one was lacking—hypocrisy. Was he then but half a power? What! he had been imprudent enough to allow an insight, to proudly lay bare his hopes and his self-esteem to those who, having the power, must feel but little inclination to admit a greedy and encroaching personality to share it. Folly and worse than folly!

"Decidedly," thought Samuel, "Iago is a great man, and egad! when one plays cards, why! the question is to win, no matter how."

Then, hastily rising from the easy-chair in which he sat, and striding up and down the room,

"After all, no!" he said to himself, a heavy frown on his brow, his hands clenched, his eyes flashing fire! "no, better lose than cheat! In a word, audacity has joys and triumphs more magnificent than trickery! and I shall wait yet a few years before I make myself into a Tartuffe. Let us be a Titan still and try to scale the heavens before we resolve to cheat them."

He stopped in front of Julius who, with head bowed in his hands, seemed absorbed in deep thought.

"Are you soon going to bed?" Samuel asked him, laying his hand on his shoulder.

Julius started from his reverie.

"No, no," said he, "I must first write a letter."

"To whom? to Christiane?"

"Oh! that's impossible. Under what pretext or by what right could I address her? But I want to write to my father."

"Tired as you are? Why not write to-morrow?"

"I shall not delay any longer; no, Samuel, I am going to write at once."

"Very well," said Samuel. "Such being the case, I also will write to that great man by the same post. And," he muttered between his teeth, "'twill be a letter written with a pen dipped in the ink that Shem used when he wrote to Noah. Let us burn these boats to begin with."

He resumed in a loud voice:

"But first, Julius, we have an essential point to settle between us."

"What is that?"

"To-morrow we are to fight with Franz and Otto. Although they are to challenge us, yet we can,—by giving them opportunities, and either by avoiding the one, or seeking the other,—we can, as I say, each choose our adversary in advance. Now, Otto Dormagen is, undoubtedly, the stronger swordsman of the two."

"Well?"

"On our side, your modesty will allow that, of us two, I am the better man with his sword?"

"That may be. What then?"

"What then, my dear boy? Why, then I think it but fair that I should undertake to look after Otto Dormagen, and I am going to do so. You, therefore, need only trouble about Ritter."

"Which means that you have no confidence in me? Thanks."

"Do not be absurd. In the interest of the Tugendbund, if not in your own, I am anxious to get all the chances on our side, that's all, and you will not even take it kindly. Remember that Dormagen is master of certain tricks of fence that are extremely dangerous."

"All the more reason. I shall always refuse an unequally divided danger?"

"Ah! you are ridiculously proud! After all, do as you like," said Samuel. "But, of course, I am proud too, and to-morrow we will both think ourselves obliged to make advances to the more dangerous one; each being desirous to anticipate the other, this will result in an unnatural eagerness in our greeting of the said Otto; we shall be the aggressors, the parts will be reversed, and we shall have disobeyed the Guild."

"Take Franz and leave Otto to me."

"What a child you are!" said Samuel. "Come, then, let us draw lots."

"As to that, I am quite willing."

"That's good."

Samuel wrote the names Franz and Otto on two pieces of paper.

"It is absurd, upon my honour! A most foolish thing to do," said he, rolling up the papers, and shaking them about in his cap. "For my part, I can never understand why man should, under any circumstances, subordinate his free intelligent will to the blind and stupid caprice of chance. Take your ticket. If you have drawn the name of Dormagen, it is probably your death-sentence, and you will have allowed yourself to be marked by fate, like sheep by the butcher; what splendid foolhardiness?"

Already Julius was unfolding the ticket he had taken; he stopped.

"No," said he, "I had rather not read it until after I have written to my father."

And he put it between the leaves of his Bible.

"Upon my word!" said Samuel, "I will follow your example, out of indifference."

And he thrust the ticket into his pocket.

Then they both sat down, opposite to each other, at their study-table, and, by the light of the same lamp, began to write.

A letter is a revealer of character. Therefore let us read the letter Julius wrote, and the one Samuel wrote.

We will begin with Julius.

"MY DEAR AND HONOURED FATHER,

"I know and am deeply sensible of all that I owe you. Not only an illustrious name, the name of the greatest chemist of the age; not only a considerable fortune, gloriously acquired by works of European renown; but above all, the inexhaustible and unbounded tenderness which has more than consoled me for the loss of a mother whom I never knew. Believe me! I am deeply touched at the thought of your kindness and indulgence. All this has made me your son twice over, and I love you both as father and as mother.

"I feel the more constrained to tell you this, as my abrupt departure from Frankfort, in defiance of your command, seems to accuse me of ingratitude and indifference. On leaving for Cassel you forbade me to return to Heidelberg. You wanted to send me to the University of Jena, where I would be separated from Samuel, whose influence over me you dread. When you return from Frankfort, you will be vexed with me for having taken advantage of your absence to journey hither. But listen to what I have to say, my dear father, and you will forgive me.

"It is neither ingratitude nor is it an escapade which has brought me back to Heidelberg, it is an imperative duty. What that duty is, I cannot tell you. The responsibility of your position and your official duties alike do not permit me to speak, because they might not permit you to keep silent.

"As to the influence which Samuel may have over me, I do not deny it. He exercises over my will a domination to which I cannot but yield; a power, strong, evil, fatal, but necessary. I see his faults as you do, but you do not see mine as I do. I am more quiet, more gentle than he, but I lack firmness and decision. Weariness and disgust easily take possession of me. I fall an easy prey to fatigue. I am quiet through want of energy, delicate through somnolence. Well! Samuel rouses me.

"Samuel, with his superabundant energy, his indomitable will, is, I believe, I am afraid, indispensable to my apathy. I feel myself alive only when he is there. When he is absent, scarcely do I exist. He is strong in place of me. My sole initiative, is he. Without him, I relapse. His scathing merriment, his wild sarcasm lash my blood. He is my intoxicant. This he knows and takes advantage of, for his is not an affectionate nor a devoted nature. But what would you? Do we reproach the guide with brutality when he rouses the sleepy traveller in the snow? Will you find fault with the bitterness of the draught that burns my lips, to rouse me from my torpor? And which would you rather see me, drunk or dead?

"Besides, my journey will not have been all in vain. I came back by the

Odenwald, and passed through some exquisite country which I had never seen before. I will tell you, in my next, the different impressions that this charming excursion has left on my memory. I will confide everything to you, to you who are my best friend. In the Odenwald I came across a house, and in this house . . . . But am I wise in telling you this? Will you not laugh at me likewise? Besides, at this moment, I do wish, I do not dare to evoke this thought, this picture.

"I return to the object of this letter. My dear father, forgive my disregard of your wishes. Just now, I stand in greater need of your forgiveness than you know. My God! my mysterious allusions may perhaps make you uneasy? Dear father, if God decide for us, I will add a few lines to this to reassure you. If I add nothing . . . . if I add nothing, you will forgive, will you not? . . . ."

For the last few minutes, Julius had been struggling against the weariness which threatened to overcome him. At this point, the pen slipped from his fingers, his head dropped on his left arm, his eyes closed, he fell asleep.

"Here! Julius!" said Samuel, on perceiving this.

Julius did not stir.

"Weak nature!" Samuel said to himself, interrupting the writing of his letter. "Eighteen hours without sleep is sufficient to exhaust him. Has he even finished his epistle? Let me see, what has he written to his father?"

He took up without ceremony Julius' letter and read it through! On perusing the passage which referred to himself, a sardonic smile curved his lips.

"Yes," said he, "you belong to me, Julius; and to a greater extent than you know, you or your father. During the last two years, I dispose of your soul; during the last minute, perhaps, of your life. But, as a matter of fact, I can ascertain that."

He took from his pocket the ticket which he had drawn by lot, and read "Franz Ritter."

He began to laugh.

"So, it rests with me, to all appearances, whether this boy live or die. I have only to let things remain as they are. Otto Dormagen will run him through like a chicken. He is asleep; I can take his ticket from his Bible, and carefully insert mine in its place; with Franz he will come off all right. Shall I do it? Shall I not? Egad! I cannot say. This is a situation after my own heart. To hold in one's hand like a dice-box the life of a human creature, to play with life and death; it's fun. Let us prolong this pleasure of the gods. Before deciding, I will finish my letter, couched, that's very certain, in less respectful terms than that of Julius, although I have, undoubtedly, the same . . . . . natural reasons for respecting the illustrious baron."

Samuel's letter was, to say the least, daring enough!

CHAPTER XI

"CREDO IN HOMINEM . . ."

HERE is Samuel's letter, and we do not hesitate to reproduce it, in all its audacity.

"SIR AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MASTER,

"Frankly, do you believe in God?

"That is to say, let us understand each other; do you believe in a God, distinct from us, solitary, selfish, and proud; creator, ruler and judge; who, if He does not foresee the things to come, is blind and ridiculous like every other head of executive power; who, if He *does* foresee the future, is as feeble as a tenth-rate play-writer; for in that case, man, his masterpiece, is but a weak, dependent, stupid creature.

"Or do you believe that that which we call God, is an entity inseparable from life and from humanity. And that, whether you will or no, your Christianity expresses this, when it says that God became man.

"To every enlightened and non-official conscience in these days, that question is a thing of the past. But, in face of the drastic consequences of this certain principle, timid minds hesitate, doubt, and grow troubled.

"The first of these consequences is the following: 'If God is man, man is God; when I say man, I do not mean the citizen or the peasant, the creature who counts up his crowns like a base huckster, or who furrows his land like an ox; I mean a man who thinks, who loves, who desires; I mean you, I mean me; in a word, I mean man!

"Now, if man is God, he has the rights of a god, that's evident. He is free to act as it pleases him, and he knows no barriers except the limits of his power. The man of genius depends on his genius alone. He has no scruples. Napoleon, whom at present we are disposed to curse, and whom we shall deify ten years hence, knows or feels this, and in that lies his greatness. Over the vulgar herd, the man of genius has the full power of the shepherd or the butcher.

"Milton's Satan said, 'Evil, be my good!' That is exclusive and limited. I would not believe myself compelled at any time to do what men call evil; but, in the same way, I would never believe myself compelled to do what they call good. Nature, that produces birds, does it not likewise produce reptiles?

"But what of social order, I hear you say? Let us discuss it.

"You are a staunch advocate of social order, I should imagine; you are one of its favoured ones. But I! I am a Jew, I am a bastard, I am poor; three stigmas independent of my will, and yet because of which your society spurns me, and for which it punishes me as for three crimes. You will allow me not to feel overwhelmed with gratitude to her on that account. So much the worse for those who ill-treat their dog instead of giving him a drink, and who feed him with blows. The dog goes mad and bites them.

"To whom then am I under any obligation? to you perhaps? Let us see.

"There exists at Frankfort a narrow street, dark and dirty, paved with sharp pebbles, and compressed between two rows of tottering houses, the fronts of which incline towards the houses opposite, as if they were drunk; a street whose empty shops open on to backyards filled with old iron and broken pots and pans; a street which at night is barred and bolted and double-locked, like a lazar-house; this is the street of the Jews.

"Never has the sun deigned to descend into this foul darkness. Well! you have been less disdainful than the sun. One day, some twenty years ago, you came there, and, in passing, you saw, seated at the threshold of the door, sewing, a young girl of surpassing loveliness; and because of this you came again.

"You were not then the scholar whom Germany has enriched and honoured; but you were young, and of keen intellect. The Jewess had strong affections. What resulted from this encounter of her affection and your intellect, is a question which you naturally will not be the one to answer.

"But I know that I was born a year later, and that I am a bastard.

"My mother married later, and died, I know not where, in Hungary. I have known only my grandfather, old Samuel Gelb, who undertook the care of the son of his only daughter.

"As to my father, I must have met him more than once; but never has he condescended to know who I was; never has he acknowledged me, either in public or private. I may have chanced to be alone with him; never has he put his arms round me, never has he whispered in a low tone: 'My child.'

"I supposed that he had made his way in the world, and that he had married. He could not, of course, recognize a Jew, and a bastard, because of his rank, because of his wife, because of the birth, perhaps, of some legitimate son——"

It was at this part of his letter that Samuel perceived that Julius was asleep, called him in vain to wake, took from his pocket the ticket he had drawn, and read on it the name of Franz Ritter.

After some hesitation, Samuel, as we have seen, replaced the ticket in his pocket, and continued his letter.

"I lived thus until the age of twelve, not knowing who my father was and not knowing who you were. At this age, I was sitting one morning, reading, on the same threshold where thirteen years before you had seen my mother at her needle, when suddenly, on looking up, I saw a grave man looking fixedly at me. It was you. You came into the shop. My grandfather, on your questioning him, humbly explained that I was not lacking either in intelligence or perseverance; that I learnt without difficulty; that I already knew all the French and Hebrew he was able to teach me; that I devoured every book I came across; but that he was poor, and could ill-afford to educate me.

"Then you were so extremely kind as to take me into your laboratory, partly as a pupil, partly as a servant. But I kept my ears open and studied hard. During seven years, thanks to my iron constitution, which enabled me to work by night as well as by day; thanks to my energy, which aroused in me a perfect passion for study, I penetrated, one by one, all the secrets of your learning, and, at nineteen, I was your equal in knowledge.

"I had learnt Latin and Greek, into the bargain, only by being present at Julius' lessons.

"You had become fond of me to a certain extent, I took so keen an interest in your experiments. And, as with set purpose, I was taciturn and reserved, you had no suspicion of what lay behind. But this could not last. It did not take you long to discover that I, on my side, walked alone and in advance of you. You became irritated and this irritated me. An explanation took place between us.

"I asked to what end all your knowledge tended; your reply was: 'To knowledge.' Eh! knowledge is not an end, it is a means. My aim was to apply it to life.

"What! we held within our hands, secrets and terrible powers; we were able, thanks to our analyses and to our discoveries, to produce death, love, madness, to quicken or quench intelligence, and, by allowing one single drop to fall on a fruit, to kill, if we so wished, a Napoleon! And this marvellous potency, the result of our toil and labour, we made no use of it! This superhuman force, this weapon of power, this principle of sovereignty, we allowed it to lie dormant. We did nothing with it. We were content to hide it in a corner, like the foolish miser who buries those millions that would make him master of the world. Thereupon you grew indignant and honoured me so far as to consider me a dangerous man. You deemed it prudent to close your laboratory against me, and you deprived me of your lessons, which I no longer needed. You refused to lead me any farther, when already I was in advance of you. And so, two years ago, you sent me to this University of Heidelberg, which, to be perfectly frank, is the very thing I longed for most, being anxious to acquire a knowledge of the legislations and philosophies of the world.

"But, another offence! Julius is here with me, and naturally, I have the influence over him, which a mind like mine must always exercise over a nature like his. Consequently, paternal jealousy and uneasiness. That son is dear to you, I readily understand; you idolise in him the heir to your fortune, to your fame, and to the twelve letters of your name. So, to take him out of my clutches, you attempted to separate us, a fortnight ago, by sending him to Jena. He chose to follow me, almost despite myself. Is it my fault?

"To sum up. What do I owe you? I owe you life. Do not be alarmed; I do not mean to say that I am your son; you have always treated me as a stranger; I accept the position that you have assigned me. I mean to say that I owe you the fact of being alive — I owe you knowledge, education, the life of the mind. I owe you, also, the allowance which for the last two years you have made me. Is that all?

"Well! I return to the starting point of my letter. I am strong, and I wish to be free. I wish to be a man, the expression of God. I shall be twenty-one tomorrow. My grandfather died a fortnight ago. I lost my mother long since. I have no father. There are no ties to restrain me. I attach value to nothing but my own self-esteem, my pride, if you will. I want nothing from anyone, and I want to be beholden to no one.

"Old Samuel Gelb has left me about ten thousand florins. I begin by sending you back the amount of the allowance you have made me. That settles the money question. As to my moral debt, an opportunity is, I believe, now at hand, in which to requite my obligation, and, at the same time, prove to you that I am capable of everything, even of good.

"Your son, your only son, Julius, is, at the present moment, in peril of death. By a combination of circumstances, which it would be superfluous to explain to you, his life depends on a paper which is there in his Bible. If he finds it, he is lost. Well! listen to what I am going to do when I have signed this letter of farewell. I shall take from my pocket a paper similar to the one that Julius chose, place it in his Bible, and take his, and with it, the danger. By this means I readjust the workings of Providence in favour of your son; in a word, I save his life. Are we quits?

"After that, my knowledge is my own, and I shall do with it as I will.

"Farewell and oblivion.

"SAMUEL GELB."

Samuel rose, opened the Bible, took from it the ticket, and replaced it by the one from in his pocket. He was sealing his letter and it was broad daylight when Julius awoke.

"Have you had any sleep?" said Samuel.

Julius rubbed his eyes, and began to collect his thoughts. In answer to his first impulse, he opened his Bible and took from it the ticket which had fallen to him.

He read "Franz Ritter."

"Well! I have the man I wanted," Samuel said quietly. "He! he! this kind Providence is decidedly more intelligent than I supposed, and it may be that it really knows whether we shall see the setting of this sun which is now rising. Only, it ought to tell us so."

CHAPTER XII

THE "PET FOX"

WHILST Julius finished his letter and sealed it, Samuel lighted his pipe.

"Now, then," said he, puffing out a whiff, "we have no reason to suppose that Dormagen and Ritter may not have had the same idea as ourselves, and have each chosen his adversary. It is therefore wise to forestall them. We must furnish them with such an opportunity to quarrel, as they will be unable to avoid."

"Let us look up the questions of honour," said Julius, "as stated in the 'Code."

"Oh!" Samuel rejoined, "it is important that we should not fight for a students' quarrel, but for some insult as between man and man, in order that we may have the right to inflict a serious wound upon these gentlemen. Let me see, has Ritter still his same mistress?"

"Yes, little Lolotte."

"She rather favours you, if I remember rightly. Very well, that is fortunate for us. We are going to walk past his house. It is a fine morning. She will be, as usual, sewing at her window. You will say a few polite nothings to her as we pass and we will await the result."

"No," said Julius, with an embarrassed air, "I prefer some other means."

"Why?"

"I do not know, but I refuse to have it said that I fought a duel for the sake of a girl."

The colour mounted to his cheeks, and Samuel laughed.

"What charming candour! He has not forgotten how to blush."

"What nonsense! I" ——

"Come! you are thinking of Christiane, admit it; and you do not wish to be even seemingly unfaithful to your thought of her."

"Are you mad!" said Julius, who experienced an inexplicable sense of uneasiness whenever Samuel spoke of Christiane.

"If I am mad, you are absurd in not wishing to say even one word to Lolotte. It would not compromise you in any way, and it is impossible for us to find a more simple or more certain pretext. Unless, of course, you have made up your mind to speak to no one but Christiane, to look at no one but Christiane, to meet no one but . . . ."

"Enough said! I consent," said Julius, with an effort.

"That's right. As for myself, against what flint can I strike, to set alight a quarrel between Dormagen and me? Deuce take me, if I can tell. Has he a mistress, too, I wonder? But should both of us employ the same means, that would show great paucity of imagination, and then, for me to fight for a woman, the thing would look improbable, on the face of it."

He reflected for a few moments.

"Ah! I have it," he exclaimed suddenly.

He rang the bell. A waiter appeared in reply to his summons.

"You know my 'pet fox,' Ludwig Trichter?"

"Yes, Herr Samuel."

"Go as quickly as you can to the 'Raven,' where he is staying, and tell him from me, that I want to see him at once."

The waiter left the room.

"Whilst waiting," said Samuel, "suppose we have a wash?"

Ten minutes later, Ludwig Trichter burst into the room, breathless, and his eyes still heavy with sleep.

Ludwig Trichter, on whom we have only bestowed a cursory glance, was the type of a student in his twentieth year. He was really at least thirty. This venerable personage had already seen four generations of students succeed each other. His beard flowed over his breast. Fierce moustaches turning upwards like the points of a crescent, eyes bleared through long-standing dissipation, lent to the face of this Nestor of taverns a singular expression of fatherly provocation.

In his dress, he affected to copy Samuel, but, as a matter of fact, Ludwig Trichter, like all imitators, aped Samuel's eccentricities, by exaggerating them.

Trichter's age and experience rendered him invaluable in many ways. He was conversant with every precedent which could affect the relations between students and Philistines, and between students among themselves. He was, as it were, the living tradition of the University. That is why Samuel had chosen him for his "pet fox."

Trichter was puffed up with pride at this honour, and the humble and servile attitude which he affected towards Samuel, made it easy to guess how insolent and haughty he must be with others.

When he entered, he held his pipe in his hand, not having allowed himself time to light it.

Samuel deigned to notice this extraordinary proof of precipitation.

"Light your pipe," said he. "Have you not yet breakfasted?"

"No, although it is seven o'clock," Trichter replied, shamefacedly, "The fact is, my dear senior, I did not return from the *Fuchsencommerz* before the small hours of the morning, and had only just fallen asleep when your gracious message awoke me with a start."

"Good, it happens fortunately that you have taken nothing. Now tell me: as Dormagen is one of our oldest 'Mossy Heads,' he, too, I suppose, has his own 'pet fox.'"

"Yes, Fresswanst."

"Is he a hard drinker, this Fresswanst?"

"Colossal; he drinks harder than anyone of us."

Samuel frowned:

"What!" said he angrily, "I have a fox, and that fox does not surpass all others in everything?"

"Oh! oh!" said Trichter, humiliated and pulling himself together, "we have never been seriously pitted against each other; but should an opportunity arise, I am quite capable of holding my own."

"Then make an opportunity this very morning, if you value my good opinion. Alas! the great school is disappearing. The traditions are being lost. There has been no liquid duel at the University for three months. There must be one this very day, do you understand? Challenge Fresswanst. I command you to drink him down."

"Enough, senior," said Trichter proudly. "But one word more. Am I to challenge him for simple beer or for wine?"

"For wine, Trichter, wine! we leave pistols and beer for the Philistines. The sword and wine are the weapons for students and gentlemen."

"Your wishes will be attended to. I am going from here to the 'Great Tun,' where Fresswanst has breakfast."

"Go, and tell everybody that Julius and I will join you, after Thibault's lecture, at half-past nine punctually. I will be your second."

"Thanks. I, on my part, will try to be worthy of you, noble sir!"

CHAPTER XIII

LOLOTTE

WHEN Trichter had gone, Samuel turned to Julius.

"Here is our programme and the course we must follow; first to the street where Lolotte lives, then to the lecture on law, so as not to alter our usual habits, then to the 'Great Tun.'"

They went out, and on reaching the foot of the staircase, a servant handed Samuel a letter.

"The deuce! can it be one of our opponents already?" said he.

But the letter was from the professor of chemistry, Zacchäus, inviting Samuel to breakfast.

"Tell your master that I have a previous engagement, and that I cannot go to him before to-morrow," The servant departed.

"Poor man!" Samuel resumed. "He is puzzled over some point. Without me, how would he get through his lessons?"

They left the tavern and reached the Brod Strasse.

Seated at an open window on the ground-floor of one of the houses, sat Lolotte, sewing. She was dark, lively, well-proportioned, with glossy hair shading her brow, and a cap pushed jauntily at the back of her head.

"There are three foxes talking to each other ten yards off," said Samuel. "Ritter will hear of it. Speak to the child."

"But what shall I tell her?"

"What you like. It is enough for you to speak to her."

Julius approached reluctantly.

"Up already and at work, Lolotte!" said he to the young girl. "I can see that you were not at the "Foxes' *Commerz*" last night!"

Lolotte blushed with delight on hearing Julius speak to her. She got up and stood at the window, work in hand.

"Oh! no, Monsieur Julius, I never go to a dance; Franz is so jealous! Good morning, Monsieur Samuel. But I do not believe that you noticed my absence, Monsieur Julius."

"I dare not say yes, Franz is so jealous!"

"Nonsense!" said she with a saucy pout of defiance.

"What are you making, Lolotte?" asked Julius.

"Some scented sachets in satin."

"How pretty they are. Will you give me one?"

"What an idea! what would you do with it?"

"Keep it in memory of you, of course," said Samuel. "Oh, the bold fellow, spite of his timid looks!"

"This is the prettiest," Lolotte rejoined bravely, after some slight hesitation.

"Will you fasten it on with a ribbon?"

"How infatuated he is!" Samuel exclaimed comically. "It looks serious."

"There . . . . . . Thanks, my dear, sweet Lolotte."

Julius drew off a ring from his little finger.

"Take this in exchange, Lolotte."

"I do not think I ought . . . ."

"Nonsense!" said Julius in his turn.

Lolotte took the ring.

"Now we must say good-bye," Julius resumed. "It is time for the lecture, and we are already late. I will see you as we return."

"Well! you are going away without even shaking hands; decidedly you are afraid of Franz."

"Make haste," said Samuel in a low tone, "here are the foxes coming towards us."

In fact the three "foxes" were passing in front of Lolotte's house, and saw Julius kiss the young girl's hand.

"Good-bye," said Julius. And he passed on with Samuel.

When they reached the lecture hall, the lesson was already well begun. A course of lectures in Heidelberg is much the same as one in Paris. The audience already showed signs of weariness. A small number took notes. About twenty others listened without writing. The rest talked, idled away the time, and yawned. Several were remarkable for the strange attitudes which they assumed. One 'branded fox,' at the extreme end of a bench, was lying on his back, with his legs in perpendicular fashion, against the wall. Another, lying on his stomach, his elbows on the seat, and his head supported in his hands, amused himself, during the lecture, with the perusal of patriotic songs. We do not doubt that the professor's words did not always penetrate the minds of the students, but it is very certain that often they went in by one ear and out by the other.

Neither Franz nor Otto attended Thibault's lecture.

The discussion over, Samuel and Julius went out with the crowd, and the clock was striking half-past nine as they entered the tavern known as the Great Sun, where the dual action, bacchic and tragic, was about to take place.

The principal hall into which Samuel and Julius entered was crowded with students. Their arrival caused a sensation.

"There is Samuel! Trichter, there is your 'senior,'" said the students.

They were evidently expected.

But the attention which had at first been directed to Samuel, became riveted on Julius, when Franz Ritter, deadly pale, was seen to leave the crowd and walk straight up to him.

Samuel, on seeing him advance, had only time to whisper to Julius:

"Be very careful. It is advisable for us to act in such a manner as to make the blame rest on our adversaries, so that, should anything serious result, the witnesses may be able to attest that we were provoked."

Ritter came up to Julius and stood aggressively in his way.

"Julius," said he, "you were seen speaking to Lolotte this morning on your way to the lecture?"

"That may be! probably I was asking her for news of you, Franz!"

"This is no joking matter. You were seen to kiss her hand. You must understand that I resent it."

"And you must understand that she does not resent it."

"You jest in order to exasperate me."

"I joke so as to pacify you."

"The only thing that can pacify me, is a walk with you, my dear fellow, to the Kaiserstuhl hill."

"A little blood-letting in the hot weather is, indeed, rather refreshing. I shall practise it on you, if you like, my boy."

"In an hour?"

"In an hour."

They separated. Julius came back to Samuel.

"On my side the affair is settled," said he.

"Good! I am going to settle mine," said Samuel.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WINE DUEL

SAMUEL had taken Trichter aside, and had already assured himself of the manner in which his favourite fox had executed his orders.

"This is what took place," said Trichter. "When I came into the tavern agreed upon, Fresswanst was at breakfast. I sauntered up to his table without pretending anything, in a hap-hazard way, as if I were simply going by. But, as I passed, I raised the cover of his tankard, and seeing only frothy beer, I said in a tone of real commiseration: 'Weak drinker!' These two words of gentle pity made him spring from his seat, in a rage. Yet, he tried to control himself, and said coldly: 'That deserves a sword thrust.' I remained perfectly cool, and said in the same melancholy tone: 'You see I was right; I humble the drinker, 'tis the swordsman that replies. Moreever,' I added, 'I am equally ready at the point or at the pint.'"

"Good, my brave fox!" said Samuel. "After that?"

"After that, he began to understand: 'If it is an encounter with glasses that you want,' he then said, 'I am pleased to hear it, my throat was getting rusty. I am going to ask my senior, Otto Dormagen, to act as my second.'—'My senior, Samuel Gelb, is coming and will be mine,' was my reply.—'What weapons?' 'Wine and Liqueurs.'—'Braggart!' said he, in a tone which he tried to make contemptuous, but which conveyed surprise and respect. And, at this very moment, the blue room is being prepared with all things necessary to this memorable combat. Dormager and Fresswanst are there awaiting us."

"We must not keep them waiting,' said Samuel.

Accompanied by Julius, they went into the blue room.

Even at the present day, wine duels and beer duels are by no means uncommon at German Universities. The liquid duel has its rules and its "code" like any other. It is executed with method, according to a system of progression, which it is not permissible to infringe.

Each drinker in turn swallows a quantity of liquid, then hurls some insult at his adversary, who, to be avenged, is obliged to drink, and to double the insult.

In beer duels, the quantity is everything; but in wine duels, there is a tariff of proportion that indicates the strength of the wines and the quantity of alcohol that they contain. In the same way, there is, for the insults, an ascending scale, a climax of insult, an acme of affront, which no one has the right to disregard. Thus the struggle ascends from claret to brandy, from the pint to the jugful, from refined epigram to coarse jest, until one of the two drinkers is incapable, unable to move his tongue to speak, open his mouth to drink. That man is the defeated one.

Besides, the liquid duel is no less fatal than the other, and for this reason the police try to check it by every possible means; which fact seems likely to perpetuate it.

When Samuel, Trichter and Julius entered the blue room, everything was in readiness for the encounter. Two formidable rows of bottles, and flagons of all sizes, all colours, all shapes, were massed at the two ends of the table, around which stood a score of "Golden Foxes," grave and silent.

Two chairs only, one opposite to the other. Fresswanst was already seated on one, Trichter appropriated the other.

Otto was beside Fresswanst; Samuel placed himself near Trichter.

Samuel took from his pocket a florin, and tossed it up in the air.

"Heads," said Dormagen.

The florin fell face downwards. It was Trichter to begin. Muse, tell us of the bumpers and of the glorious fight in which these two noble sons of Germany proved to other nations to what degree of elasticity the human envelope can be distended, and how, contrary to all laws of physics, the container is sometimes less than the contained.

We pass over the first glasses and the first insults, preliminary skirmishes or reconnoitres, which exhausted but a few epithets, and emptied barely five or six bottles between the two combatants.

We go on to the moment when the worthy fox, Samuel's favourite, took up a bottle of Moselle, poured more than half of its contents into a huge Bohemian glass, drank negligently and turned the empty glass upside down on the table.

Then, looking at Fresswanst, he said:

"Smug!"

Generous Fresswanst smiled scornfully. He took two glasses of the same size as the one Trichter had used, filled them to the brim with claret, and with assumed indifference swallowed the contents of both to the last drop, as if his thoughts were far away.

Having gulped down this enormous bumper, he said:

"Water-drinker."

All eyes were at once turned towards big Ludwig Trichter who showed himself not unworthy of so flattering a curiosity. The wine which immediately follows claret, in the alcoholic scale, is Rhine wine. Trichter had the hardihood to skip over one degree and at once attacked Burgundy. He caught hold of a bulging flagon, emptied the contents into his glass, and having drained it to the last drop, cried in stentorian tones:

"Friend of Kings!"

The only acknowledgment which this exclamation and show of bravado received from Trichter's adversary was a shrug of the shoulders, which in itself was an insult. The illustrious Fresswanst would not be outdone; Trichter had omitted Rhine wine, he left out Malaga, and boldly attacked Madeira.

Not content with this achievement, and desirous of introducing some further innovation, he caught hold of the glass which until then he had made use of, and smashed it against the table. Then he took the bottle itself and funnelled the contents into his mouth with marvellous dexterity.

The spectators saw the wine flow from the bottle into the man, and Fresswanst did not even stop to take breath, never for one moment faltered. A quarter disappeared, then half, then three quarters, and this valiant Fresswanst drank on.

When he had done drinking, he turned the bottle upside down. Not a drop fell out of it.

A thrill of admiration passed over the spectators.

But that was not all. The stroke did not count unless completed by an insult. And we must confess that the gallant Fresswanst seemed almost passed saying anything at all. His whole energy had evidently spent itself in this tremendous effort. The rugged champion was now on a chair, exhausted, dejected, his nostrils unnaturally distended, and his mouth hermetically closed. The Madeira was wrestling. At last it appeared vanquished because Fresswanst the magnificent, half opening his lips, succeeded in muttering the one word:

"Coward!"

The applause was loud and long.

Then, O Trichter, didst thou surpass thyself. Feeling that the decisive moment was approaching, thou didst rise. No longer affecting indifference, which would have been out of place at this stage of the drama, thou didst shake thy thick head of hair, which fanned the crowd like a lion's mane. Slowly didst thou tuck up the sleeve of thy right arm to give thee freedom of movement (because we refuse to believe that this was for the unworthy purpose of gaining time), and, with a solemn gesture, raising to thy lips a bottle of Port, thou didst ingulf it at one draught.

Then, without allowing himself a second's breathing time, and as if in a hurry to get it over, Trichter articulated in a clear voice, these two syllables:

"Swindler!"

"Good!" Samuel deigned to say.

But when the famous Trichter attempted to sit down again, his eyes apparently deceived him as to the position of his chair, for he fell down heavily, measuring his length on the floor, a very excusable position, to be sure, after such a drowning.

Immediately all eyes turned towards Fresswanst. But alas! Fresswanst seemed utterly unfit to parry the unexpected thrust of his opponent. The unfortunate fox had slipped from his chair and likewise sat on the floor, his back supported against the leg of a table, his legs stretched wide apart,—there he lay, stupefied, his eyes fixed, his arms stiff and inert.

Dormagen said to him:

"Courage! Come, it's your turn."

Fresswanst did not stir.

Nothing remained but to resort to desperate measures.

CHAPTER XV

ONE DROP PREVAILS OVER EIGHT PAILS OF WATER

FRESSWANST was clearly deaf to all words, insensible to all blows. Nevertheless, he was still partially conscious.

Dormagen therefore resorted to the great and final expedient sanctioned by the laws on liquid duelling.

Kneeling down, so as to be as close as possible to Fresswanst's ear, he called aloud:

"Hey, Fresswanst! Fresswanst! do you hear me?"

He was answered by an almost imperceptible sigh, and Dormagen resumed solemnly:

"Fresswanst! how many sword-thrusts did the great Gustavus Adolphus receive?"

Fresswanst, unable to articulate a syllable, nodded his head once.

Dormagen made a sign to a student, who went out and returned a minute later with a pail filled with water.

Dormagen poured the water over Fresswanst's head.

Fresswanst seemed perfectly unconscious of it.

Dormagen again spoke loudly in his ear:

"How many sabre-cuts did the great Gustavus Adolphus receive?"

Fresswanst nodded his head twice.

Two students went to fetch two pails of water which were again religiously emptied over his occiput.

Fresswanst made no sign.

Dormagen continued his questioning:

"How many gun-shots did the great Gustavus Adolphus receive?"

Fresswanst nodded his head five times.

Five students brought in five pails and continued inundating the lethargic drinker.

At the fifth ducking, which made the eighth, a contraction of the muscles of Fresswanst's face, proved that he was coming to.

Dormagen hurriedly snatched from the table a flagon of gin, which he held to Fresswanst's lips.

Fresswanst, thus aided, gulped down the diabolical liquor, and, roused by this fiery liquid after the icy water, he sat bolt upright, and, in a harsh voice and thick speech, mechanically uttered the word:

"Murderer!"

Then he fell back, this time, hopelessly.

But Dormagen's side triumphed.

Trichter, lying prone on the floor, insensible, half-dead, was evidently not in a fit condition to continue the joust.

"We have won," said Dormagen.

"Do you think so?" said Samuel.

He went up to his fox, and shouted to him with might and main: Trichter was deaf to everything. Samuel, enraged, gave him a kick: Trichter gave not the least sign of life. Samuel shook him roughly; it was of no use. Samuel seized from off the table a flagon similar to that which Fresswanst had so valiantly drained; only, instead of gin, this was kirsch; he tilted the flagon and attempted to insert the neck of it in Trichter's mouth; but the latter instinctively clenched his teeth

The spectators were already congratulating Dormagen.

"Oh, human will! dost claim to resist me!" muttered Samuel between his teeth.

He rose, went to a sideboard, took from it a knife and a funnel.

With the blade of the knife he forced open Trichter's teeth; thrust the end of the funnel into the opening, and quietly poured in the kirsch, which filtered drop by drop down the throat of the helpless fox.

Trichter offered no resistance, not even opening his eyes. Those around stooped over him anxiously. His lips moved, but in vain. He could not utter a sound.

"Nothing done so long as he has not spoken!" cried Dormagen.

"And I must confess that it appears impossible to extract a word from that hogshead," said Julius, shaking his head.

Samuel looked at them fixedly, drew from his pocket a tiny phial, and carefully poured one drop of its contents on Trichter's lips.

He had not withdrawn his hand before Trichter, as if struck by an electric shock, drew himself up, started to his feet, sneezed, and with flashing eyes and outstretched arm, hurled at Fresswanst, in a clear voice the word that, in students' vocabulary, is the acme of insult, compared with which coward, swindler, and murderer are sweet madrigals:

"Fool!"

There was a universal exclamation of admiration and surprise.

"That's cheating!" exclaimed Otto Dormagen, furious.

"Why?" said Samuel with a frown.

"It is allowable to throw water in the combatants' face, to shake them, to make them drink by force; but it is not fair to make use of an occult and unknown beverage."

"What do you mean?" retorted Samuel: "a drinking duel necessarily admits everything which can be drunk."

"That's fair! that's fair!" said everyone.

And what is this drug?" rejoined Dormagen.

"A simple liquor, which I place at your disposal," replied Samuel. "I poured, and quite ostensibly, it seems to me, one drop of it into a flagon of kirsch, the quantity that Fresswanst must drink to take up the challenge; add to it two drops, and Fresswanst will speak."

"Give it me," said Dormagen.

"There is the phial. But a word of warning; this composition is not quite without danger, and if your fox drinks two drops of it, he certainly will never recover from the effects. For the one drop, I shall even now have trouble to save mine."

A shudder passed over those assembled.

"I may add," resumed Samuel, "that if you resort to this extremity, you will not even then have the last word. Samuel Gelb will not be defeated. I will not hesitate to sacrifice Trichter, and will make him drink three drops."

This was said with such cold-blooded heartlessness, that, despite the terror Samuel inspired, a prolonged murmur arose. Julius was bathed from head to foot in cold sweat.

The general feeling inspired Otto Dormagen with courage, he stepped up to Samuel, and looking him straight in the face, said:

"Our language is poor, and reduces me to these words all too weak to convey my thought: Samuel Gelb, you are a villain and a scoundrel."

Everyone shuddered, and waited anxiously to hear what Samuel would reply to such an insult. A lightning flash illumined the eyes of the students' King, his hand clenched instinctively, but only for a second; he at once regained control over himself, and replied in a tone of the utmost calmness. But his calmness was more terrifying than his anger:

"Then we will fight presently. Dietrich, you will be my second. Let seconds and friends arrange in such a manner as for us to find all in readiness at the Kaiserstuhl. Let the scouts post themselves along the road. The police would spoil everything. The report of a duel between Ritter and von Hermelinfeld must already have reached their ears. And it is necessary that we should not be disturbed. For, by the devil! I swear to you, this will be no laughing encounter. This is the first time I have been insulted, it will be the last. Gentlemen, I promise you all a duel which will make the very stones speak."

Once more it was the King of students who addressed them. He spoke with authority, and all present bowed themselves and obeyed his command. He sent out, in uneven numbers and in scattered groups, the students who were in the hall, indicating to them, in a few brief words, the manner of procedure they were to adopt, so as not to arouse suspicion, and the place at which they were to station themselves on the Kaiserstuhl.

Dormagen himself waited for the commands of this General, before withdrawing.

At last Samuel turned to Julius:

"Go on ahead, I will rejoin you at the Acacias. You have your second?"

"Yes, Lewald."

"Very well, good-bye for the present."

Julius went out, but only from the hall, not, at first, from the hotel. Ought we to confess what he did? He entered a small room, locked himself in, pulled out his pocket book and took from it a faded wild rose, kissed it, then slipped it carefully into the satin sachet which he had purchased from Lolotte, passed the ribbon round his neck, and concealed the dear relic beneath his garments. This manly unmanliness accomplished, he smiled as if satisfied, and only then quitted the tavern,

Then, Samuel, when there remained in the blue room but himself and the two drinkers, lying dead-drunk on the floor, stooped down, and placed his hand on Trichter's forehead. Trichter sighed. Samuel said, "That's all right!"

Then he muttered: "That Dormagen! he has forgotten his fox, who was, for all that, colossal. It is a good sign."

Samuel called a waiter, and pointing to the two combatants:

"Put them in the 'Chamber of the dead,'" said he.

The chamber of the dead is a small room stuffed with straw, where drinkers, who have reached a state of total insensibility, are taken to be looked after.

Samuel then was the last to leave, and bent his steps towards the Kaiserstuhl hill, whistling a *viva vallera.*

CHAPTER XVI

A DOUBLE DUEL

AT the meeting place agreed upon, Samuel rejoined Julius and the two students, who were to act as their seconds.

The customary place for encounters between "Studiosi" is behind the Kaiserstuhl Hill, two miles out of Heidelberg.

When a mile from the town, the students proceeded more cautiously. They left the main road and pursued their way across country. Occasionally they looked back to satisfy themselves that they were not followed. On meeting any townsmen, Dietrich and Lewald, the two seconds, accosted them, and with a threatening gesture, rendered all the more forcible by the heavy sticks they carried, advised them to go in some other direction. The citizens obeyed with alacrity.

Samuel's orders had been carried out to the letter. At stated intervals, students had been placed on the look-out to avoid surprise. Dietrich exchanged a few words with them in a low tone, and the scouts answered, "Pass on!"

At last, after thirty-five minutes' walk, they arrived at a little inn, hidden among the trees, fresh, smiling, with green shutters, rose-coloured walls, the roof buried under a choice profusion of creepers.

The four students walked through a garden in which the rays of the sun played among the flowers, and entered into the dancing and duelling hall, which measured sixty feet long by thirty wide, and admitted of waltzing or fighting, loving or dying at ease.

Ritter had already arrived, and with him the students from the blue room; Dormagen came in shortly after with his second.

Four "Mossy Heads" were busily employed chalking out the space limits for each duel, in order that the one might not interfere with the other.

Meanwhile four "Golden Foxes" adjusted hilts to blades, sharp and triangular like bayonets, and from this resulted four Jena rapiers, two and a half feet long.

The swords of the "Studiosi" are made in two sections, which come apart, to insure their being more easily concealed from the police; the "studiosi" carry the blade under their cloak and the hilt in their pocket, and thus defy detection.

"Are we ready to begin?" said Ritter.

"Presently," replied a student, who was preparing a box of instruments in one corner of the room.

This was the surgeon, a student in medicine who had come for the purpose of stitching up the wounds and gashes which the swords were about to inflict.

The surgeon went to a door at the end of the room and cried out: "Be quick."

A servant entered carrying two towels, a basin and a can of water, which he placed beside the box of instruments.

Dormagen looked on impatiently while all these preparations were being made, addressing a few curt, abrupt words to the students who crowded round him; Franz went from Otto to the surgeon; Julius was calm and grave.

So far as Samuel was concerned, his whole attention seemed concentrated on repulsing the assault of a little rose, which aided by a joyous breeze, seemed bent on effecting an entrance by the window.

"Now, everything is ready," said the surgeon.

Julius approached Samuel, and Ritter went up to Dormagen.

The four seconds took down from a rack nailed against the wall, four felt masks, four gauntlets, and four padded belts, and were about to fasten them on the combatants.

Samuel pushed Dietrich aside:

"Take this rubbish away!"

"But it is the rule," Dietrich objected, and he pointed to the "Code," an old greasy book, bound in black with red clasps, which lay open on the table.

"The 'Code,'" rejoined Samuel, "regulates quarrels between students, this is a quarrel between men. It will not end only in pin-pricks; and this is not the time to wear protectors, but rather to strip off one's clothes."

And, suiting the action to the word, he divested himself of his coat and threw it to the other end of the hall.

Then he took up the first sword that came to hand, and pressing its point to the floor, tested the blade, then he drew himself up and waited.

Otto followed his example, likewise Julius and Dormagen, and all four stood ready for the attack, chest and arms bare, sword in hand.

Samuel's speech and action gravely impressed the onlookers. There was a general presentiment that the affair might have a tragic ending.

Dietrich clapped his hands three times, then uttered the emphatic and orthodox word:

"Engage!"

The four swords met simultaneously.

In the hall, all eyes were fixed, every breath suspended.

The first pass was, on both sides, a trial one. The adversaries were taking their measure.

Julius and Ritter appeared evenly matched. The storm of anger, that jealousy had aroused in Franz at the moment of the challenge, had given place to cold concentrated rage. As to Julius, it must be acknowledged, that he was at his best. Calm, firm, brave without bravado, his youthful grace was enhanced by the manly pride born of peril and courage. On both sides, however, such agility and presence of mind was manifested, that the encounter might have suggested rather a display than a duel, had not an occasional rapid disengagement, quick thrust, more quickly parried, which appeared to graze the chests of the opponents, reminded the spectators that the danger was real, and that life and death hung at the end of these pointed blades, flashing with such swift grace.

Contrary to the usual custom of students' duels, which is a rather more than ordinarily dangerous fencing match, neither Julius nor Franz spoke a word.

As regards the other contest, it was evident from the first that it was of a far more serious and terrible nature.

Samuel Gelb had, on his side, the advantage of his superior height and cool imperturbability.

But Otto Dormagen was supple, impetuous, daring, and there was no avoiding the boldness and unexpectedness of his movements.

It was an unusual and thrilling spectacle to witness the coolness and ease of Samuel, in face of the agility and impetuosity of his adversary. The encounter of these two swords was assuredly exciting! the one quick, swift, cunning, blinding like the zig-zag of lightning, the other inflexible, imperturbable, sure, straight, like the needle of the lightning rod.

Samuel could not refrain from speaking and laughing. He met Otto's furious attacks with disdainful assurance, never missing an opportunity of sneering, and accompanying each thrust by some sarcastic remark.

He corrected Dormagen, warned him, gave him advice, as a fencing master would to a pupil.

"Badly parried. I had exposed my

self purposely! Let us begin again. In tierce this time. That's better now! Young man, you will succeed. Look out, sir! I am going to lunge direct."

And he suited the action to the word; Dormagen had only time to step back quickly. Another second, Samuel's sword would have pierced his breast.

This scornful recklessness, however, began to exasperate Dormagen. In proportion as his annoyance increased, and his wounded self-esteem betrayed itself in the more jerky activity of his hand, Samuel redoubled in superb scorn, and added the stabs of his tongue to the stabs of his sword.

His face shone with savage delight. One felt that danger was his element, catastrophe his delight, death his life. He, too, in his way, was magnificent, and his powerful head, with its strong angular features, was incontestably splendid. His nostrils were dilated, the curve of his lips, his substitute for a smile, was more coldly insolent than ever, his wild changing eyes glittered like a tiger's. An indescribable expression of fierce pride, animating his whole being, held the spectators spell-bound between horror and admiration. There were moments when he swept the entire hall with his haughty glance, eloquent of superb indifference to life and death.

It was impossible, seeing him thus, calm, prompt, steadfast, and pouring out words, like a fencing-master under his *plastron*, not to conceive the idea that he was invulnerable.

Dormagen, who began to feel uncomfortable under the pressure of this glacial raillery, wished to put an end to it, and risked the lunge of which Samuel had made mention to Julius.

It was a feint of extraordinary boldness and impetuosity. He lunged after a free thrust, and, without recovering, lunged a second time, having missed his opponent. The danger lay in the vigour, the spring, and the rapidity which he put into this second onslaught.

There was a cry. Everybody thought Samuel dead.

But Samuel, as if he had divined Dormagen's thought at the moment of its conception, had swerved aside so quickly that the stroke, deadly though it was, only grazed the full folds of his shirt.

Samuel sneered and Dormagen grew pale.

Just at that moment, Julius was less fortunate. He was a little too late with his guard "in prime" to parry a thrust, and was slightly wounded in the left arm.

The seconds interposed and these two strokes brought the first engagement to a finish.

CHAPTER XVII

AN ANGEL'S PRAYER—A FAIRY'S TALISMAN

AT this stage of the proceedings, an attempt was made to bring the affair between Julius and Franz to an end. The seconds were of opinion that sufficient satisfaction had been given for so small a matter as a passing word to a "grisette." But Franz, apart from his jealousy, had received his orders from the *Tugendbund* as to Julius.

"Come now, gentlemen," said he, "when one of us two has fallen at the feet of the other, we shall stop, not before. If we come here expecting only a scratch, swords are needless, a needle would suffice."

And, turning to Ritter:

"Are you rested?" said he.

So far as Otto and Samuel were concerned, no one for a moment entertained the idea of inducing them to stop at this point, so plainly evident in the attitude of the one was the furious rage of a missed stroke, and in the attitude of the other the unfaltering resolve of an iron will.

This interlude in no wise interrupted Samuel's decisive remarks:

"Remember this," said he to Dietrich, "there is no advantage possible without its disadvantage. Thus, Otto's thrust is a distinct advantage until such time as he misses it. At the present moment you see my worthy adversary thoroughly demoralised."

"You think so?" said Dormagen exasperated.

"Oh! if I have any advice to give you, my dear Otto," rejoined Samuel, "don't talk. You are already out of breath through the very praiseworthy efforts you have made to insert into my skin half a foot of pointed steel, and, if you talk, you will but further increase the difficulty you experience in breathing."

Dormagen snatched up his sword.

"Come on!" said he, with such authoritative anger, that the seconds instinctively gave the signal.

At that moment Julius was thinking:

"Eleven o'clock! *She* must be at church; perhaps *she* is praying for me. Without doubt, it is that which saved my life a few moments ago."

The signal, whilst rousing him from his sweet reverie, found him, as will be imagined, only more ready and more determined.

The duel recommenced.

This time, Dormagen no longer heard Samuel's jeers. In a fury of rage, he attacked almost without defending himself, more eager to wound than to cover. But, as invariably happens, the tumult of his mind caused his hand to tremble and he struck with more fury than accuracy.

Samuel perceived the excitement under which his adversary laboured, and did all he could to increase it. This time, he entirely changed his tactics. Instead of being quiet and imperturbable, as in the first pass, he sprang, lunged, changed his sword from one hand to the other, teasing, annoying, irritating Dormagen, blinding him with the lightning of his feints, dazing him with the unceasing din of his words.

Dormagen began to lose his head.

Suddenly Samuel called out:

"Eh! gentlemen! Philip of Macedon, of which eye was he blind?"

He went on, by his amazing agility persistently tiring Otto Dormagen, who grew wilder and wilder, less and less accurate in his fence.

"I think it was of the left eye. Philip, the father of the great Alexander, gentlemen, was laying siege to—I have forgotten the name of the town. An archer of the town took an arrow, upon which he wrote: 'To the left eye of Philip!' and the arrow arrived at its address. But why the devil! the left eye rather than the right."

Otto replied with a direct lunge.

But he had miscalculated; his blade glided over Samuel's, the point of whose sword he felt at his breast.

"You are exposing yourself," said Samuel.

Otto ground his teeth. It was evident that Samuel spared him, and played with his life like a cat with a mouse.

The encounter was no less animated for the other couple. But it was more equal.

However, on a feint of disengagement, Ritter parried by a straight stroke, so prompt, so lightning-like, that Julius had not time to defend.

The steel touched him on the right side.

But, wonderful chance! instead of penetrating, the steel glanced aside on a silky yielding substance whose movable course it followed, barely grazing the skin on his breast.

On this Julius had but to thrust out his sword; it buried itself three inches deep in Ritter's side, who sank to the ground.

What had saved Julius' life was the little silk sachet suspended round his neck and containing the faded wild rose.

"Ah! you have finished?" said Samuel.

At these words, the seconds understood that Samuel likewise wished to bring his encounter to a close. Dormagen tried to forestall him, and attempted a second time the stroke in which he had already failed.

"Again!" said Samuel. "You repeat yourself!"

Already he had avoided the steel by the same dexterous agility; but, this time, by a singular and unforeseen stroke, forcibly raising Otto's sword, he simultaneously turned back his own, dug the point of it into Dormagen's brow, then by a subtle movement quickly withdrew it.

But the point had penetrated the left eye an inch and a half deep.

Dormagen uttered a terrible cry.

"I purposely chose the left eye," said Samuel. "It will be less inconvenient for shooting."

The witnesses crowded round the wounded men.

Franz's right lung had been pierced. But the surgeon was hopeful of saving his life.

The surgeon came up to Dormagen.

Samuel did not wait for him to speak.

"His life is not endangered," said he. "I simply wished to deprive him of one eye. You will notice that instead of penetrating the skull, and injuring the brain, as it lay in my power to do, I withdrew the steel as delicately as a surgical instrument. It is in fact an operation."

And turning to the surgeon:

"He has not breakfasted. Bleed him

quickly, if you wish to avoid a rush of blood to the brain. With care, he will be out again in a fortnight from now."

Just as the surgeon, lancet in hand, was preparing to act on Samuel's advice, a 'Finch' came hurriedly into the hall.

"Well! what is the matter?" said Samuel.

"The police!" cried the 'Finch.'

"I thought as much," Samuel said tranquilly. "They could do no less than honour me with some slight attention; are they far off?"

"Fifty yards away."

"Then we have time. Do not be uneasy, gentlemen, this is my business."

He tore up his handkerchief and bound it tightly round Julius' left arm.

"And now, quick, put on your coat."

He likewise resumed his own.

The police were coming up the garden.

A 'fox' addressed Samuel:

"Are we not going to resist the 'stiff-collars?'"

"A free-fight?" Samuel answered. "That would be exciting. We would thrash them in a trice, and you tempt me, demon. But it is inadvisable to be too lavish of sanguinary amusements, it would end in our becoming 'blasés.' There is another and more simple way."

Knocking was heard at the door.

"In the name of the law!" said a voice.

"Open to these gentlemen," said Samuel.

The door was opened and a squad of police-officers entered the hall.

"There has been fighting here?" said the man in charge of the detachment.

"That is possible," said Samuel.

"The combatants must follow us to prison," resumed the chief.

"That is scarcely as possible," replied Samuel.

"Why so? Where are they?"

Samuel pointed to Otto and Franz:

"Here they are, both in the doctor's hands. They have mutually wounded each other. You can see for yourself that at present they stand more in need of the surgeon than of the jailor."

One glance sufficed to convince the chief of the serious nature of the wounds, —a look of disappointment passed over his face, and, without uttering a word, he withdrew with his men.

As soon as the "stiff-collars" had disappeared, Julius went into a small room adjoining, sat down at the table, reopened the unfinished letter to his father, added a few lines, and sealed it.

After which, he wrote on another sheet of paper:

"My Dear Sir,

"The prayer of an angel and the talisman of a fairy, have already twice saved my life. We are alive, and all danger is passed.

"Until Sunday, when I hope to express my thanks in person.

"Julius."

He then handed the two letters to Dietrich, who was returning at once to Heidelberg, and would post them before the next mail went out.

When Julius returned to the duelling hall, the two wounded men were being removed on stretchers, and Samuel was saying:

"And now we must kill time until dinner. That is the wearisome result of our morning's excitement. What shall we do till mid-day?"

"What shall we do till Sunday?" thought Julius.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT LOVE

THE next Sunday, as early as seven o'clock in the morning, Samuel and Julius left Heidelberg, and, following the course of the Neckar, took the road leading to Landeck. They were on horseback, each carrying his fowling-piece fastened on to the saddle. In addition, a portmanteau was strapped behind Samuel.

Trichter, now completely recovered from his victory, walked along smoking his pipe; he seemed prouder than ever of his noble senior, whom he accompanied as far as the last houses.

He stated that on the previous evening he had been to see the two wounded men. They were both certain to recover. But Dormagen would be confined to the house three weeks, and Ritter a month.

On reaching the gates of the town, Samuel dismissed his favourite fox, and the two companions started off at a trot.

Julius' whole being responded to the beauty of the dawn, further enhanced by thoughts of Christiane.

Never had Samuel seemed to him more witty, more animated, more amusing, and, in flashes, more unfathomable. Samuel's words, sparkling and sentient, full of caprice and full of thought, were an exact interpretation of Julius' delight in the scenery as also of his sense of enjoyment. Julius received the impression, Samuel added to it the expression. And thus they arrived at Neckarsteinach.

They had discussed University life, studies and amusements. They had spoken about Germany and independence. Julius was one of those young, loyal natures which respond ardently to such ideas, and he felt happy and proud at having bravely done his duty, and fearlessly risked his life for a dear and sacred cause.

Samuel and Julius had, in fact, spoken of everything except of the one subject of Christiane; Samuel had not mentioned her, perhaps because he had not thought of her; Julius, possibly, because he thought of her too much.

Samuel was the one to speak of her first.

"Now then!" he said suddenly to Julius, "what are you bringing?"

"What am I bringing?"

"Yes! surely you have bought some trinket for Christiane?"

"Oh! do you suppose that she would have accepted it? Do you take her for a Lolotte?"

"Nonsense! there was once a queen who said that the acceptance of a gift depended on its costliness. But, at least, you have thought of bringing the father some rare book on botany? For example, the 'Linnæi Opera,' with engravings, that valuable edition of which Steinbach, the bookseller, has such a fine copy."

"What a fool I am! I never thought of the father," Julius ingenuously confessed.

"Rather an unfortunate omission," Samuel rejoined, "but I am quite certain that you have not forgotten the pretty child who did not leave Christiane's side, and whose side you did not leave. You have, of course, for Lothario, one of those marvellous toys from Nuremberg, which are the delight of all German children between five and ten years of age? Once when we were together we admired immensely a prodigious Boar-hunt: you remember, the swarming bas-relief in wood, on which was to be seen an entire village, magistrate, schoolmaster, citizen, hanging to the tail, to the ears, to the bristles of his swinish majesty, it made us hold our sides with laughter, grown-up children that we are. I bet that you have bought the bas-relief. And what a splendid idea on your part. You were right just now; the child was the one to whom to give Christiane's present. In that way, generosity is perfected by delicacy. In giving to Lothario, you give to Christiane twice over."

"Why do you tell me this so late?" said Julius, vexed with himself."

And, giving a quick jerk to his reins, he turned his horse's head towards Heidelberg.

"Stop!" cried Samuel. "There is no need for you to go as far as Heidelberg for the toy and the book: they are both here."

"What!"

"The rare edition of Linnæus, and the Homeric pig-hunt, both are in my portmanteau, and I make you a present of them."

"Oh! thanks," said Julius. "That is very thoughtful of you."

"The fact is, my dear boy, you must not allow the grass to grow under your feet where this little one is concerned. I will help you. If I allowed you to go your own sweet way, you would abandon yourself to melancholy sentiment, and, at the end of a year, would be no farther advanced than on the evening of the day when first you saw her. But I am there, so do not be anxious. You already see how willingly I have abstained from competing with you. I fall back on Gretchen. The goat-herd bears me ill-will, she distrusts me instinctively, she had almost insulted me. That nettles me. I shall succeed in the end. I do not attract her; therefore she attracts me. Which of us two will be the first to win. Shall we have a bet on it? And now, let us put spurs to our horses, begin this race for beauty, and you will see how easily I leap over scruples."

Julius had become serious.

"Samuel," he said, "I must beg of you never to discuss Christiane in my presence."

"Do you consider that I spoil her

name by mentioning it? Well! I think you might let me say what I let you do; and, as I do not suppose that you go to Landeck solely on account of Messieurs Schreiber and Lothario, you might surely allow me to insinuate that you go for Christiane."

"Supposing that it is for her?"

"If it is for her, I imagine that you have some aim in view; and, admitting that, it is not with the intention of making her your wife . . . "

"Why not?"

"Why not? Ha! ha! ha! how young he is! Frankly for two reasons. To begin with, Baron von Hermelinfeld, that very wealthy, very honourable, very powerful nobleman, will not choose as his daughter-in-law a simple country maiden, when there are daughters of counts, of princes, and of millionaires, who would be proud to bear his name. Besides, you yourself would not wish it. Are you old enough to be a husband?"

"Love knows no age."

"Love and marriage are two things, my young friend."

He went on in deep passionate tones:

"Oh! I do not disparage love! Love is possession. To be master of a human creature, to conquer a soul, to add to your own heart that of another which is no less your own although it beats in another breast, to extend your own existence by means of other existences, dependent and subject, that indeed is grand, sublime! I confess to that Promethean ambition of love! But the question is to add to one's own personality as many other personalities as possible; to enrich oneself with all the devotion one meets with; to absorb every iota of power and of life one finds within reach. Such men are fools as content themselves with one woman, and are satisfied with one better-half, rather than with a hundred. That makes women weep! So much the worse for them. The sea is the sea for the sole reason that it absorbs every drop from every river. For my own part, I would drink every tear shed by every woman, to experience the intoxication and pride of the ocean."

"You deceive yourself, my friend," replied Julius, "greatness does not consist in having, but in being. Wealth does not result from receiving, but from giving. As for me, I would give my entire self, and for always, to the woman I loved. I would not fritter away my heart in the base coin of fifty trivial and passing fancies; I would concentrate it in one golden love, deep and eternal. Nor on that account would I deem myself more petty, more miserly; quite the reverse. It is thus, Samuel, that human joy develops into divine happiness. The end of Don Juan, with his thousand-and-three mistresses, is hell; the end of Dante, with his one and only Beatrice, is heaven."

"You see," said Samuel, "that theory develops into literary poetry and love. But here we are at the cross-roads. Le' us draw rein and descend to reality First of all, we had best be known only b' our Christian names, not our surnames."

"Yes!" said Julius. "Not because distrust her, but because I distrust m' self. I want to pass for a simple studen without fortune, so as to be quite certa that she loves me for myself alone, not fr my name."

"Yes, to be loved for oneself! we have heard that before," said Samuel. "Let us proceed,—and, in the second place, listen quietly to the friendly proposal I am about to make you. You will marry Christiane, so be it; but it is necessary that she be willing to do so. Therefore, it is essential that you should make yourself beloved. So, make use of me, if needs be, as adviser, or even . . . . . or even, because that may assist, as chemist."

"Enough!" Julius cried in horror.

"You excite yourself quite needlessly," Samuel replied quietly. "Lovelace, who was as good a man as you, adopted just those means with Clarissa."

Julius looked Samuel in the face:

"Look here, you must be very radically corrupt if the thought of this pure girl arouses in you such monstrous designs; your soul must be utterly dead if this glorious sun gives birth to such reptiles! She, so confiding, so innocent, so unsuspecting! to take advantage of her goodness and guileless confidence! Ah! it would not be very difficult to ruin her! there would be no need of your charms and philtres. Spells would be unnecessary; her love would be all-sufficient."

Then, as if talking to himself, he added:

"She had good reason to mistrust him and to warn me against him."

"Ah! she said that?" demanded Samuel, with a start. "Ha! she has spoken against me to you? Perhaps she ates me? Take care. I have so far aken no notice of her, as you know; I was leaving her to you. But take my word for it, if she hated me, I would love her. Hatred is a difficulty; that is to ay, a provocation; it is an obstacle, and love obstacles. If she were to love me, would ignore her; but if she hates me, beware!"

"Beware yourself!" retorted Julius. "For her sake, I feel there is no friendship that would weigh with me. Know that for the happiness of a woman I loved, I would not hesitate to die."

"And I," said Samuel, "for the unhappiness of a woman who hated me, I would not hesitate to kill you!"

The conversation so happily begun, seemed likely to take a tragic turn. But at this moment, the horses brought them within sight of the manse.

Christiane and Lothario awaited Julius under the limes and waved him a joyous welcome.

Oh foolish nature of lovers! In the twinkling of an eye, Julius forgot the dark and threatening attitude Samuel had assumed, and to him the world was bathed in light, sweetness and purity.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FAIR RECLUSE OF THE WOODS

JULIUS set spurs to his horse, quickly reached the gate, and looking at Christiane with glad tender gratitude:

"Thank you!" said he.

"Is all danger over?" Christiane asked.

"Quite over. Your prayer has saved us. God could not deny us His protection; we implored it through you."

He dismounted. Samuel soon rode up, and bowed to Christiane, who greeted him politely but coldly. She summoned the stable-boy, and told him to lead the horses to the stable and carry the luggage into the bedrooms.

Then she accompanied her guests into the house.

Gretchen was there, looking rather awkward, poor girl, in her Sunday clothes. The length of her dress impeded her movements; her stockings cramped her legs, she could not walk comfortably in shoes.

She bestowed on Samuel a hostile glance, and on Julius a sad smile.

"Where is Herr Schreiber?" asked Samuel.

"My father will be here presently," replied Christiane. "But, on leaving the church, he was detained by one of the village lads, who wished to speak to him on an important matter. It concerns someone in whom we are deeply interested."

And Christiane looked with a smile at Gretchen, whose air of astonishment proved that she did not understand.

Just then, the pastor came into the room, eager, genial, and as frankly delighted at seeing his guests as if they had been old acquaintances.

They had waited only for his return to sit down to table. This second dinner was more animated, more unrestrained than the other. In accordance with the good old German custom, Gretchen was of the party.

Samuel, who now studied Christiane's pure, maidenly face with new interest, exerted himself to please, and was full of animation and wit. He gave an account of the duel, omitting, of course, the causes and pretexts which led up to it, and maintaining also a discreet silence in connection with the Castle of Heidelberg and Lolotte's window. But he made Christiane laugh over the scene in the blue room and caused her to tremble over the encounter at the Kaiserstuhl.

"Dear me!" she said to Julius, "supposing, however that you had had this Dormagen as adversary?"

"Oh! then, I should have been a dead man, without a doubt," Julius laughingly replied.

"These duels, which our students treat so lightly, are a most barbarous and culpable custom," said the pastor. "I do not speak only as a priest, gentlemen, I speak as a man. And I feel almost tempted to congratulate you, Herr Julius, in not being more skilled in these deadly encounters."

"Then," Christiane rejoined, not knowing herself why she put the question, "Herr Samuel is superior to you in fencing, Herr Julius?"

"That I cannot deny," replied Julius.

"Luckily," added Samuel, "a duel is not likely to take place between comrades as *brotherly* as ourselves."

"Or if such a thing did happen," said

Julius, "it would be a duel to the death, a duel from which only one of us would rise again, and, under such circumstances, it is always possible to equalise the chances."

"Are you challenging fate?" rejoined Samuel quietly. "In that case it would decide against you. I do not know whether it be because I have always scorned to play for money, but each time that I have tempted chance, it has never failed me. So take warning! This is capital wine of yours, Herr Schreiber; it is Liebfraumilch, is it not?"

Whether from presentiment or foreboding, we cannot tell, but certain it is, that at Samuel's quiet, sinister words, Christiane grew pale and could not repress a shudder. Samuel possibly perceived this.

"This is not a remarkably cheerful subject of conversation," he rejoined. "Can you not introduce something more cheerful, Julius?"

Julius understood Samuel's meaning, he went out and returned almost immediately with the Boar-Hunt, which he gave to Lothario, and the Linnæus, which he presented to the pastor.

Lothario's delight was unbounded. His face shone with joy, and he remained speechless, overpowered by the wonder of it. Alas! by bestowing such delights on children, life imagines that it owes nothing more to man.

But the pastor was no less delighted, and no less a child than his grandson. He was lost in apologies and thanks, reproaching Julius with ruining himself. It was too much for the purse of a student.

Julius felt somewhat abashed at thus accepting the credit for an attention which belonged to Samuel; but Christiane thanked him with a look. He had not the courage to give up that look to Samuel.

He kept all to keep the smile.

They went into the garden where coffee was served. Gretchen, who had throughout maintained her defiant attitude towards Samuel, placed herself behind Christiane's chair.

"Now, Gretchen," said the pastor, as he poured his hot coffee into his saucer, "I want to speak to you."

"To me, sir?"

"Yes, to you and on a serious matter. That makes you laugh? Yet you are no longer a child, Gretchen. Do you know that you will soon be eighteen?"

"What of that, sir?"

"What of that! At eighteen, it is time for a girl to think of the future. You do not want to spend your whole life among the goats?"

"With whom, then, do you wish me to spend it?"

"With an honest fellow, who will be your husband."

Gretchen shook her head laughing the while:

"And who would ever want me for a wife?"

"Such a thing is not improbable, my child; and, in fact, supposing it did happen?"

The goat-herd became serious:

"Are you in earnest?"

"I told you that I would have to speak to you on serious matters."

"Then, if you are serious," rejoined Gretchen, "I shall answer you in a like manner. If any man asked me to marry him, I should refuse?"

"Why?"

"Why, sir? Well in the first place, my mother, after you had converted her, dedicated me to the Virgin."

"That was against my will, and contrary to our religion. Besides, her vow is not binding on you and if there are no other reasons . . . ."

"There are others, sir. One is that I do not wish to be dependent on anything or anybody; another, that I am not used to having a roof over my head, nor a will above my will. Once married, I should have to leave my goats, my plants, my forests, my rocks. I should have to stay in villages, walk in streets, live in houses. As it is, when winter comes I suffer enough in rooms, I feel choked enough on Sundays in these clothes. Ah! if you had ever spent the summer nights as I have, in the open air, under a ceiling of stars, on a bed of moss and flowers which the good God Himself makes fresh every morning! Why! there are monks and nuns who cloister themselves during their whole lives in convents and in monasteries; well, for me, my cloister should be the forest. I would be a recluse of the woods. I belong to solitude and to the Virgin. I do not wish to belong to any man. Now I go where I will, and I do what I like. If I were married, I should do what my husband liked. You probably deem this pride on my part. But I dislike the world, whose touch withers and soils whatever it comes in contact with. Perhaps this feeling arises from having seen so many of my poor flowers die when uprooted from the ground, or when only bruised. I shall never allow myself to be touched. It seems to me that I would rather die. Truly, dear master, that vow was not made by my mother from selfish motives, but from motherly love, not in thinking of her sins, but in remembering her sufferings. The love of man is humiliating and cruel. When young horses that have never known the curb, see anyone approach, they take fright. I am like a wild horse, and I will not be curbed."

Gretchen said this in so resolute and proud a tone of untamed innocence and incorruptible modesty, that Samuel turned his ardent gaze from Christiane to her.

He looked fixedly at her.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Supposing that, instead of a peasant, some one of better birth offered himself; if, for example, I asked your hand in marriage."

"You?" said she, as if hesitating to reply.

"Yes, I! Do you know that I am capable of doing it?"

And at the time he thought he spoke the truth.

"If it were true," she replied, after a moment's silence, "I should accept you even less. I say that I detest villages; then I am not likely to love towns! I say that the thought of every man is in some way revolting to me; it is not the thought of you that can tempt me."

"I thank you for the compliment, and I shall remember it," said Samuel with his menacing laugh.

"You will think over my words, Gretchen," the pastor hastened to say. "There comes a time when our legs refuse to climb peaks and ravines. Besides, when you know the name of the worthy lad who loves you and would be glad to make you his wife, you may perhaps change your mind. Your friend, Christiane, will speak to you about it later on."

There the conversation ended. But, a few minutes later, Gretchen, ill at ease with those in whose presence the question of her marriage had been discussed, disappeared without saying a word. The pastor became absorbed in the pages of his Linnæus. Lothario, since rising from table, was entirely taken up with the delights of his new plaything.

On Christiane alone devolved the duties of hospitality towards Julius and Samuel.

CHAPTER XX

THE MOUTH OF HELL

WHO could ever know what thoughts agitated the deep, unfathomable mind of Samuel Gelb? When he saw that the pastor and the child were absorbed by the presents of Julius, he entered upon a cordial defence of his friend to Christiane. Julius, according to him, had every quality—tenderness, devotion, faithfulness—and, beneath his gentleness, should occasion arise, a fund of energy and strong determination. Those he loved could always depend upon him. He had fought splendidly, and so on, and so on. Samuel embarrassed Christiane by this point-blank enthusiasm, and the young girl instinctively suffered on hearing such praise from the lips of Samuel. Although believing what he said, she could not help detecting the irony beneath his words. He had nothing but good to say of Julius; she would have preferred that he had spoken ill of him.

As to Julius, he was not listening. After having laughed and mistrusted Samuel's praise, he had let his thoughts wander elsewhere. He remembered the happy talk he had had with Christiane on that other afternoon, and felt sad at memory of that past joy.

Christiane took pity on him:

"Father," she said, raising her voice, "I have promised that we will take these gentlemen to the ruins of Eberbach and to the 'Mouth of Hell.' Will you come as far?"

"Willingly," said the pastor, closing the book with a regretful air.

But nothing would induce Lothario to go out. He had asked Gretchen to tell some of his little friends in the village that he had an important piece of news for them, and had determined to stay in so as to dazzle them with the Hunt.

They set off without him, and took a delightful crossroad, which would bring them out at the "Mouth of Hell;" this being the most distant point, they wished to begin by it. The pastor, stimulated to botanize by the rare volume, monopolized Samuel, questioning and wrangling with him over all the plants they came across. This was another way of continuing the reading of Linnæus.

At last Julius found himself alone with Christiane.

How he had longed for this opportunity. And now, when it was actually within his grasp, he felt embarrassed and knew not how to turn it to his advantage.

He had not a word to say. He remained silent, not daring to give expression to the only thing he had to tell.

Christiane noticed Julius' embarrassment, which but increased her own.

They walked on, therefore, side by side, silent, troubled, but happy. But what mattered their silence! did not the birds in the sky, the sunbeams in the trees, the flowers in the field speak for them, and tell them the exact words they would have told each other.

They arrived thus at the "Mouth of Hell."

Just as they came in sight of it, Samuel, clinging with one hand to a root, was leaning over the abyss.

"Bless my soul!" he was saying, "that is a pit deserving of its name. Devil take me if I can see the bottom of it. The last time, when I could not see the bottom, I thought it was on account of the darkness; now, I realize that it is because of the depth. I see that I do not see. Come and look down, Julius."

Julius advanced to the edge, greatly to Christiane's alarm.

"Do you know," said Samuel, "that this would be a convenient spot to rid oneself of a man against whom one had a grudge? A jerk of the elbow would be enough, and I doubt if the man would ever come up again or if anyone would descend to look for him."

"Stand back!" cried Christiane in alarm, quickly pulling Julius' arm.

Samuel burst into a laugh.

"Are you afraid that I shall give Julius a push?"

"Ah! you see the least false step!" Christiane stammered, covered with confusion.

"As a matter of fact, the Mouth of Hell is perilous," rejoined the pastor, "and, in addition to its legend full of mystery, it has its history, full of tragical incident. Not two years ago a farmer in the vicinity either fell or threw himself into it, poor fellow! Attempts were made to recover his body. But those who had the courage to be lowered with ropes into the abyss, had scarcely time to shout to be drawn up again. At a certain depth, the mephitic exhalations from the gulf cause asphyxiation and death."

"Grand, deep gulf!" said Samuel. "For all that, it appeals to me no less in the sunshine than in the darkness. Yet, see, wild flowers grow there. Foliage adorns the danger lurking beneath. It is fascinating and deadly. Attraction and repulsion. I said by night that I loved it; I find by day that it resembles me."

"Oh! it's true," Christiane exclaimed irresistibly, as if struck by his words.

"I must in turn caution you to beware of falling over, Mademoiselle!" Samuel replied politely, drawing her away from the brink.

"Let us leave this spot," said Christiane. "You may laugh at me, but in this horrible place, I always feel afraid. My heart grows heavy, my mind becomes filled with foreboding. To see my open grave would terrify me less. Misfortune lurks here. Let us walk on to the ruin."

In silence, the four companions bent their steps towards the old castle, and some minutes later, found themselves among the remains of what had once been the Castle of Eberbach.

The ruin appeared as smiling and pleasing by day, as it was gloomy and terrifying by night. A confusion of moss-grown vegetation, and sweetly scented wild flowers, diffusing perfume all around, almost entirely concealed the débris, each cleft and cranny being held together by long trails of ivy, or tendrils of the vine, hope born of this past, youth of this old age, life of this death.

Birds sang from every branch, and at the base of the castle, on that side where Samuel's horse had so terribly circled round in empty space, the Neckar, shining in the sun, flowed broadly on, far as the eye could reach, through the luxuriant valley.

This grand yet smiling spectacle awakened in Julius a train of delicious thought. Samuel had enticed the pastor towards a door surmounted by defaced armorial bearings, and was listening to the history of the ancient counts of Eberbach.

Christiane turned to Julius:

"What are you thinking about?"

The young girl's gesture, when she drew him away from the precipice, had somewhat emboldened Julius.

"What am I thinking of?" he answered. "Oh! Christiane you said awhile ago, when standing by the abyss, 'misfortune lurks here!' I dream, in the midst of these ruins, 'happiness is here.' Oh! Christiane, anyone who were to restore this castle to its beauty and its former magnificence, and who, fencing in his future within the relics of this past as if to preserve and ennoble it, were to live in this solitude, the sky above his head, this scenery before his eyes, and at his side a sweet young wife, innocent and pure,—oh! Christiane, listen to me. . . . ."

Without knowing why, Christiane felt deeply moved. The tears came into her eyes, although never had she felt more happy.

"Listen," Julius went on, "I owe my life to you. This is no mere empty phrase, it is a fact. I am superstitious at heart. At one time, in this duel, I saw the sword of my adversary pointed at my breast. I gave myself up for lost. At once, I thought of you; inwardly I spoke your name, and the sword only grazed the skin."

"At what hour was this?" said Christiane.

"At eleven o'clock."

"Oh! I was praying at that hour!" the girl said naïvely, with glad surprise.

"I knew it. But that is not all. At the second pass, again was I touched and would have been a dead man, if my adversary's blade had not come in contact with a silken bag, containing, can you guess what? The magical wild rose that you had given me."

"Ah! can it be true? Blessed Virgin, I thank thee!" cried Christiane.

Julius resumed:

"Well, Christiane, since you have taken the trouble to intercede for me, since your prayer has been heard, maybe it is because my life will be of use to you in some way. Ah! if you would!"

Christiane was trembling and said nothing in reply.

"One word!" pursued Julius, bending on her a look of passionate and tender love, "or, if not a word, at least, a sign, to assure that what I say does not grieve you; that you do not reject this dream of living together, among all this exquisite scenery, we two, alone with your father. . . . ."

"And without Samuel," quietly said an ironical voice behind them.

It was Samuel, who had left the pastor, and had overheard Julius' last words.

Christiane blushed. Julius turned round, furious with Samnel for having so inopportunely broken in on his sweet waking dream.

But just as he was about to utter some scathing retort, he was prevented from doing so by the re-appearance of the pastor.

Samuel whispered to Julius:

"Would you rather have been surprised by the father?"

They turned back in the direction of the manse.

This time they all walked together. Christiane avoided Julius. Julius, on his side, no longer sought to be alone with Christiane. He feared to receive her answer as much as he had before desired it.

In returning along the road, the approach of the party suddenly startled and dispersed four or five goats.

"Those are Gretchen's goats," said Christiane. "The goat-herd cannot be far off."

And, in fact, Gretchen soon came into sight, seated on the summit of a hillock; she had resumed with her simple, rustic clothes, her untamed care and gracefulness.

The pastor called Christiane to his side, and said a few words in her ear. Christiane replied by a gesture of assent, and at once began to climb the hillock, directing her steps towards Gretchen.

Simultaneously Julius and Samuel sprang forward to help her up the ascent.

"No, no!" said she, laughing. "I must speak with Gretchen alone, and I am a sufficiently good mountaineer to dispense with your assistance, gentlemen."

And she bounded quickly and lightly up the steep path, and had soon rejoined the goat-herd.

Gretchen was sad and the tears were in her eyes.

"What is the matter?" asked Christiane.

"Oh! Mademoiselle, you know my little roe, the one I found motherless in the forest, and that I reared like my own child, on returning hither I could not find her anywhere, she is lost."

"Do not be anxious! she will come back," said Christiane. "But listen, Gretchen, I want to have a long talk with you. Expect to see me between six and seven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"And I also have much to tell you," Gretchen replied. "During the last three days the plants have told me many things about you."

"Very well! where will you lead your goats?"

"Near the Mouth of Hell, if agreeable to you?"

"No, no; rather in the direction of the ruins."

"I will be there, Mademoiselle."

"Very good! to-morrow morning, at six o'clock, near the ruins. Good-bye till then, Gretchen."

As Christiane turned to retrace her steps she was astonished to see Samuel immediately behind her; with a few quick bounds, he had climbed the hill.

"I felt that I must at least offer you my arm to descend," he said.

She could not tell whether he had overheard their words.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT THE FLOWERS FORETOLD

THE following morning, before half-past five had struck, Samuel came into Julius' room, fully dressed and with his gun slung across his shoulder.

"Halloa! you everlasting sleeper," said he, "I suppose you do not feel inclined to come out shooting?"

Julius rubbed his eyes.

"Are you going out shooting?"

"Yes! in search of all kinds of game. Why should we have brought our guns, if not for that? Ha! you are falling off to sleep again. Listen, if you decide to get up, you will rejoin me."

"No," Julius answered, "I shall not go out this morning."

"Ah! and may I ask why?"

"I am going to write to my father."

"Again! What an epistolary son you are becoming!"

"I have matters of importance to communicate to him."

"As you will," rejoined Samuel, who had his reasons for not insisting. "Good-bye for the present, then."

"Good luck."

"Thanks for the wish and for the omen."

Samuel went out and Julius got up.

But, though Samuel had risen early, Christiane had risen still earlier. At the very hour when for somewhat doubtful reasons, the sceptical student walked through the dew empearled grass, whistling as he went along, the sweet young maiden, more prompt in the performance of her good action, had already joined Gretchen at the ruins of Eberbach, and, with tender, persuasive words, had introduced to the little goat-herd the honest fellow who wanted to make her his wife. He was a young farm labourer of Landeck, Gottlob by name, a good hard-working peasant, who, from afar, and without daring to speak his love, had, for the last year, worshipped the lovely goat-herd with his whole heart.

Gretchen, sad but determined, persisted in refusing him.

"Then you will have nothing to say to me, Gretchen?" said poor Gottlob, with a heavy heart. "You refuse me, you scorn me."

"I thank you and I bless you, Gottlob," Gretchen replied. "You must have a good heart to have dreamed of marrying this little goat-tender, who does not possess a penny; this gipsy girl, who has no home and no relatives. But, Gottlob, the plant that has no roots must have no flowers. Leave me to my solitude and my roving life."

"Listen, dear Gretchen," rejoined Christiane, "my father says that what is against nature is against God, and that perhaps, some day, you will be punished for having disregarded the common law, and will regret what you have done."

"Dear lady, you have all the goodness and beauty of the flowers, and your father all their wisdom and serenity. But I follow my natural instincts in wishing to keep to my free forest life. Transplant into your garden this wild thorn, and it will die."

"No! say rather that you hate me, Gretchen!" cried Gottlob. "Let us leave her, Mademoiselle Christiane, I see very plainly that she hates me."

"Stop, Gottlob," rejoined Gretchen, "and do not go away with bitter thoughts of me. Gottlob, had I ever wished to live in the house, and under the rule of a husband, I would have chosen your roof and your authority in preference to any other, do you know, because you are good and faithful, and you work steadily and with energy, as is the duty of every human creature. Gottlob, I say more; should Gretchen ever change her mind, and you have not plighted your faith to another, Gretchen will take no other husband but you; this she swears before God. That is all I can say, Gottlob. And now, let us shake hands and do not think unkindly of me, who will ever think of you as of a brother."

Poor Gottlob tried to speak but could not utter a word. He simply pressed the hand which Gretchen held out to him, bowed humbly to Christiane, and, with faltering steps, retraced his way through the ruins.

When he was gone, Christiane tried once more to reason with Gretchen; but the goat-herd implored her to desist from her entreaties.

"Let us speak of you, my dear young lady," said she; of you, who, God be thanked, have none of my wicked, wild disposition, and who may be loved as you deserve to be."

"We have time," Christiane laughingly replied. "And what of the lost roe?"

"She has not come back, Mademoiselle," Gretchen answered sadly. "I spent the whole night calling to her, in vain! This is not the first time she has run away, ungrateful little thing! and I always hoped she would come back. But never has she stayed so long in the forest."

"You will find her again, never fear."

"I am afraid not. You see, she is different to my goats that are quickly tamed. The roe is wild from birth, and has trouble to accustom herself to sheds and to human faces. She has freedom in the blood. She is like me, and that is why I loved her, that is why . . . . ."

Gretchen did not finish. Suddenly she trembled and started to her feet, terrified.

"What is the matter with you?" exclaimed Christiane.

"Did you not hear?"

"What?"

"The report of a gun!"

"No."

"Well! I heard it, and it is as if the shot had entered my heart. If it were my roe that has been shot . . . . !"

"Come! are you mad. Calm yourself, and since you want to speak about me, let us rather do so."

The thought of Christiane was all-sufficient to make Gretchen forget her anxiety. She sat down again on the ground, and looking up into Christiane's face with eyes full of tenderness.

"Yes, yes, let us talk about you," said she. "I speak of you every day to my flowers."

"Tell me," rejoined Christiane, not without some hesitation, "do you really believe in what the flowers tell you?"

"Do I believe it!" said Gretchen, and a look of strange inspiration lighted up her face. "Not only do I believe in it, I am sure of it. What interest could the flowers have in saying what was untrue? Nothing in the world is more certain. The science of the language of flowers is very ancient. It comes from the East, and from the early ages of the world, when men were yet simple and pure enough for God to deign to speak to them. My mother knew how to read the plants, and she taught me how to do so; her mother had taught her. You have no faith in the flowers? The proof that they say what is true, is that they have told me that you will love Monsieur Julius."

"They are mistaken!" Christiane said quickly.

"You do not believe in it? The proof that they say what is true, is that they have told me that Monsieur Julius loves you."

"Is that the truth?" Christiane replied. "Well, I am willing to believe in it. Let us consult them together."

"See, I have brought quite a harvest of them," said Gretchen, pointing to a large scented nosegay at her feet. "On what shall we consult them?"

"You hinted the other day that they had told you that these two young men would bring me misfortune. I should like to know what they mean by that."

"It is precisely about these two young people that I wanted to speak to you."

"Well!"

"See. These plants were culled this morning before dawn. We are going to question them. But I know beforehand what they will reply; for, since the other day, I have already tried them thirteen times, and on each occasion their answer has been the same."

"What was it?"

"You shall see for yourself."

She got up, took the plants in her hand, spread them out on a table of moss-covered stone and arranged them in a certain mysterious order, according to their shape, and the hour or the place in which they had been gathered.

Then, riveting her gaze upon them, forgetting by degrees the presence of Christiane, and, losing herself more and more in ecstatic contemplation, she began to speak in a slow and almost solemn voice:

"Yes, the flowers say everything to those who know how to understand them. Men have books in which they write their thought with letters; God's book is nature, and His thoughts are written in its plants. But, one must know how to read nature. My mother has taught me how to spell the flowers."

Her face clouded over.

"Always the same words!" she muttered. "He who always appears at unforeseen moments is a man of ill-fortune. Why did I bring him hither? And the other, will he be less fatal? Poor dear girl, already she loves him."

"But I do not!" Christiane interrupted. "Your flowers are wrong."

"And he," went on Gretchen, not noticing the interruption, "how he loves Christiane!"

"Which said that?" hurriedly asked Christiane. "Was it that mauve flower? How beautiful it is!"

Gretchen continued, still absorbed:

"They are young, they love one another, they are good, and therefore they will be unhappy. Always the same reply. But here is an extraordinary thing!"

"What then!" Christiane asked anxiously.

"I had not yet seen as much. Here, I see them both united; then, the union ends suddenly, almost at once. But that is strange! the separation is not death, and yet they still love each other. The one without the other, for long years, separated, far apart, they live as strangers. What does that mean?"

As she was stooping anxiously over the table, a shadow obscured the sun, and was suddenly reflected on the plants.

Christiane and Gretchen turned round with a start.

It was Samuel.

Samuel feigned profound astonishment on seeing Christiane.

"Pardon my disturbing you," said he, "but I came to ask Gretchen, who knows all the intricacies of the forest, to do me a service. This is what has happened: I shot a head of game just now in the forest."

Gretchen shuddered. Samuel continued:

"I must have wounded it severely. I will gladly give Gretchen a *friedrich* if she will discover the place where it has gone to die. It disappeared in the direction of the 'Mouth of Hell.'"

"A roe?" Gretchen asked in a trembling voice.

"White, with grey spots."

"I told you so!" exclaimed Gretchen to Christiane. And she sped away like an arrow.

Samuel viewed this abrupt exit with surprise.

"Upon my word!" said he to himself, "I have succeeded more easily than I had hoped in being alone with Christiane."

CHAPTER XXII

THREE WOUNDS

CHRISTIANE moved as if to follow Gretchen, but Samuel said:

"Pardon my detaining you, I wish to speak to you."

"To me, sir?" said Christiane, taken aback.

"To you," Samuel repeated, "and permit me to ask you, plainly and frankly, a question which, since yesterday, has preoccupied my thoughts. Is it true you hate me?"

The colour rose to Christiane's face.

"Answer me freely and without reserve," he continued, "and do not be afraid of hurting my feelings. The fact of being disliked does not affect me. I shall tell you why presently."

"Sir," Christiane answered in troubled tones and selecting her words with care, "you are my father's guest, and, up to the present, you have neither said nor done anything which could justify my having any aversion to you. Besides, I hope I am not so uncharitable as to hate anyone."

Samuel's keen, piercing eye had never left the young's girl's face whilst she spoke thus, with timid, downcast gaze. He resumed:

"I have not listened to your words, I have studied your face. It is more truthful than your reply. One thing is very certain, if you do not absolutely hate me, you, at any rate, dislike me. Pray do not excuse yourself. I repeat that that does not displease me; on the contrary, I am rather glad to know it."

"Sir! . . . . "

"I prefer hatred to apathy, anger to forgetfulness, active dislike to passive indifference. Bless me! you are a pretty girl, and to men like myself, a pretty girl is already an incentive. It is something that appeals and stimulates any heart with a spark of pride. Never have I beheld beauty in a maid of sixteen summers, without being seized with that ungovernable desire to appropriate it. But, as time is an object with me, more often than not I pass by. However, in this instance, the provocation is two-fold. You do me the honour of hating me. To the provocation of your beauty, you add that of your aversion! You declare war against me! I accept the 'challenge.'"

"Upon my word, sir, where have you seen . . . . ?"

"Oh! in your look, in your tone, in your words at the Mouth of Hell. And not only that. Have you not already tried to come between Julius and me? Do not deny it! You have placed yourself between my friend and me, imprudent girl! You have tried, bold maiden! to rob me of his confidence, to take his affection from me. That is your third challenge! Very well! so be it. I am his evil genius, so his father says; you will be his good angel. The drama of all the old legends will be played out between we two. This prospect is attractive. Dual struggle! struggle between you and me for Julius, struggle between Julius and me for you. He will have your love, I, your hatred. Be it love or hate, it is equally a part of your soul. And already I am more certain of my success than of his. You undoubtedly feel aversion to me; are you certain of any feeling of love for him?"

Christiane made no reply; but standing erect, mute, indignant, and, despite herself, charming, her whole appearance spoke for her.

Samuel resumed:

"Yes, I am in advance of Julius. You have not yet told him that you love him. More than that; probably, he himself has not yet openly avowed his love. This young man is gentle and good, but he is utterly lacking in decision. Well! on this point again I forestall him. Listen: You hate me. I love you."

"Sir, this is too much!" exclaimed Christiane, unable to restrain herself.

Samuel appeared not to notice the young girl's indignation. He glanced carelessly at the table on which were still spread the flowers consulted by Gretchen.

"What were you doing when I interrupted you?" he asked carelessly. "Ah! you were questioning the plants? Well, would you like me to answer for them? Shall I tell you the good fortune, or if you prefer the epithet, the ill-fortune they foretell? I am going to begin with one item of news in which you will, I hope, be fairly interested. I predict that you will love me."

Christiane shook her head scornfully.

"Oh! as to that," said she, "I do not believe it, nor am I afraid of doing so."

"Let us understand each other," replied Samuel. "When I say that you will love me, I do not exactly mean that you will think me charming, or feel an overwhelming affection for me. But what matters, if, to subdue you, I am willing to forego your tenderness, and, the means being different, the result be the same?"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"You will soon do so. I say that that child who dares to defy me, Samuel Gelb, will, some day or other, before we die, whether she will or no, be mine."

Christiane drew herself up proudly, trembling with anger. It was the girl who had listened; it was the woman who replied.

"Oh!" said she with a bitter smile, "you sent Gretchen out of the way, because you were afraid in the presence of two children, and now that there is only one, you dare to speak! you dare to insult the daughter of your host! Very well! although I am in your power, although you have a gun in your hands and wickedness in your heart, yet I am not afraid of you, and you will not prevent my answering you. You have wrongly interpreted the future. It is now my turn to tell you what will happen, not at some vague, far-off date, but within an hour; I am going, and before an hour has passed over our heads, I shall have told all to my father, who will forbid you the house, and to your friend, who will give you the chastisement you deserve."

She turned away as if to leave him. Samuel, instead of attempting to detain her, simply said, "Go!"

She stopped in surprise, and looked at him alarmed.

"Well! go then!" said he with cold composure. "You think me a coward for having told you what was in my heart and on my mind! But, if I were a coward, I should have carried out my intention and kept silence. Child! child!" he went on in a strange tone, "you will understand some day that at heart this man, whom you defy, is utterly contemptuous of humanity in general, and of life in particular. If you desire to understand this at once, fly to denounce me. But no," he resumed, "you will not do that; you will not mention a word of all this either to your father or to Julius; you will not complain of me, and you will most carefully avoid any outward signs of repulsion towards me. Your attitude will be as icily polite as this marble."

"Why should you suppose so?" said Christiane.

"Because if you even appeared to bear me ill-will, your father would enquire from you the reason why, and Julius would demand satisfaction from me. Now, as Julius himself has told you, I am undoubtedly his superior in fencing. But the pistol is my favourite weapon. You see I am clever at most things. I do not say this to boast, nor do I claim any merit for it; it results from the fact that I never sleep more than four hours a day. Therefore that leaves me fifteen hours for study and five for enjoyment. And of these five hours of apparent leisure, not one is wasted, so far as my will and my mind is concerned. When I seem to be taking a little relaxation, I am learning a language, or training myself in some bodily exercise, or in some new feat of horsemanship or of arms. These things are always useful, you see. Therefore, to tell Julius a word is plainly to kill him. Should you yield to your inclination, I shall look upon it as a mark of your favour."

Christiane looked him full in the face.

"So be it!" said she, "I shall mention it neither to my father nor to Monsieur Julius. I shall defend myself alone. And I am not afraid of you, and I laugh at your threats. What can avail your audacity against my honour? And since you compel me to tell you so, yes, it is true, from the first day I saw you, from the very first, I felt an unconquerable aversion for you. I felt that you had a bad heart. But it is not hatred. I do not hate you, I despise you."

A flash of anger, quickly repressed, shot across Samuel's face; but, in a moment, he recovered his usual composure.

"That's right!" exclaimed he, "I call that well spoken. That is how I love to see you. You are beautiful like that. Let us express the whole matter in two words. The question lies in a nutshell. Firstly you want to rob me of Julius' heart and mind, and you will not succeed. Secondly, you hate me, I love you, and I will have you. There it is. Ah! here comes Gretchen."

Gretchen, in fact, drew near slowly and carefully, bringing back with difficulty her wounded roe. She seated herself on a rock, holding on her knees the poor animal, which looked at her with imploring eyes.

Samuel approached, and leaning on his gun:

"What nonsense!" said he. "She has only a broken leg."

Gretchen, who was leaning over her pet, looked up at Samuel with eyes ablaze with anger.

"You are a monster!" she said.

"You are an angel," said he. "You hate me also. I love you also. Do you imagine that two loves are too many for my pride? One day, at the University, I fought two students at the same time; I wounded both my adversaries, not receiving even a scratch. Farewell, my sweet foes!"

He slung his gun across his shoulder, bowed to the two young girls, and walked away in the direction of the Manse.

"Did I not tell you, Mademoiselle," cried Gretchen, "that that man would be fatal to us?"

CHAPTER XXIII

COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES

MEANWHILE Julius had written lengthily to his father.

After sealing the letter, he dressed and went out into the garden. There he found the pastor. Julius went up to him and pressed his hands warmly and respectfully.

"You have not, then, gone shooting, with your friend?" asked the pastor.

"No," Julius replied, "I had to write," and he added:

"A letter, on which the happiness of my life depends."

He drew the letter from his pocket.

"In it, I ask my father a question, the answer to which I shall await with impatience. To get it an hour earlier, I would give I know not what. Go for it myself? I entertained the idea for a moment, but have not the courage to do so. Can I not find at Landeck some postillion, some special messenger who could ride off at once, take this letter to Frankfort, and bring me back an immediate answer at Heidelberg? I would pay him whatever he asked."

"That is easily done," said the pastor. "The post-boy's son lives at Landeck. He is known to the post-masters all along the line, because of having sometimes replaced his father, and will be delighted to earn a few florins."

"Oh! then, here is the letter."

Herr Schreiber took the letter, summoned his servant lad, and sent him to the boy at the post-house with instructions that he should find himself in the saddle at the Manse within three-quarters of an hour.

"That is exactly the time it takes to go from here to Landeck and back," said he to Julius. "You will give him the letter yourself, that it may not go astray between this and then."

Then, glancing mechanically at the address:

"To the Baron von Hermelinfeld?" said he in a voice of deep and glad surprise. "Is that the name of your father, Herr Julius?"

"Yes," Julius answered.

"You are the son of Baron von Hermelinfeld! A poor country parson like myself has the honour of receiving into his house the son of that illustrious man, whose name is famous throughout Germany! I was glad to welcome you here, now I am proud to do so. And you did not give your name?"

"And I must beg of you not to mention my name before Mademoiselle Christiane or before Samuel," said Julius "We had agreed, Samuel and I, not to disclose our identity, and I do not wish to seem like a child who cannot keep a promise for twenty-four hours together."

"Set your mind at rest," said the kind pastor, "I will be as secret as yourself. But I am so delighted to know you. The son of Baron von Hermelinfeld! If you knew how I admire your father! Often have I spoken of him to my intimate friend, Pastor Ottfried, who was a fellow-student of his."

The conversation was interrupted by the return of Samuel.

"Well! have you had a successful morning?" Julius asked.

"Delightful! I have not killed anything, for all that," added he, with a laugh; "but I have found lairs and discovered trails."

Christiane returned almost at the same moment.

On the previous evening the young men had announced their intention of leaving immediately after breakfast.

They therefore sat down to the morning meal, the pastor glad of the news he had heard, Julius dreamy, Christiane serious, Samuel in very high spirits.

Breakfast over, the pastor turned to Julius with a cordial and entreating look:

"Come now," said he, "is it absolutely necessary for you to return to Heidelberg so soon? Since you are in such a hurry to have a reply to your letter, why do you not wait here for it, you would have it two hours sooner?"

"As regards myself," said Samuel, "it is quite impossible for me to remain. Of course, it is very delightful to while away my time in the enjoyment of your hospitality, in shooting and living out-of-doors; but I have to study, especially now. I am engaged in an experiment which demands my immediate attention."

"But Monsieur Julius?"

"Oh! Julius can do as he likes. But, let him remember that he too has engagements yonder."

Christiane, who so far had said nothing, looked steadily at Samuel and said:

"Are these engagements of such a

nature as to absolutely prevent Monsieur Julius from sparing us this one day?"

"That's right! add your entreaties to mine, my child," said the pastor joyously.

"Ah! is this the beginning of hostilities?" said Samuel, laughing likewise, but bending on Christiane a look which held its meaning for her. "The contest is really not equal. However, I refuse to yield, and if Mademoiselle will permit me to speak to Julius apart, I can then remind him of his engagements at Heidelberg . . . . "

"Oh! certainly," said Christiane with disdain.

Samuel drew Julius aside.

"Have you confidence in me?" said he, in a low tone, "and have you ever regretted following my advice in the ruling of your life? Well! believe me. Do not be weak. The little one takes the bait. But take care, it is best not to appear too eager. Come away with me and let solitude and loneliness do its work. Absence will prove your best ally. Another thing: remember that on Saturday, or rather Sunday, at one o'clock in the morning, there is the General Assembly of the Tugendbund, and do not risk being lulled to sleep in the delights of Capua. Are you a man who loves his country, or a child like Lothario, tied to a woman's apron-strings? Now, do as you like, you are free."

Julius returned to the table in deep thought.

"Well!" said the pastor.

"Well!" Julius answered, "I must confess that he has given me sufficiently good reasons."

The pastor's face fell, and Samuel turned to Christiane with a triumphant air.

"Do not yet despair, father," said Christiane, laughing and trembling. "It is now my turn to say a few words aside to Monsieur Julius. That is fair, is it not?"

"Quite so!" exclaimed the kind old pastor, who had no suspicion of the drama which was being enacted beneath this comedy.

Christiane lead Julius apart.

"Listen, I have only a word to say to you, and should that word not prevail against the advice of your Monsieur Samuel, very well; I shall at least gain a salutary experience. Yesterday, in the ruins of Eberbach, you asked me a question which I could not then answer. If you remain, I will give you your answer."

"Oh! I will stay!" cried Julius.

"Bravo! Christiane," said the pastor.

"I thought as much," said Samuel coldly. "When will you return?"

"To-morrow, I suppose," said Julius. "At latest, the day after. I will have the answer from my father to-morrow, shall I not, Monsieur Schreiber?"

"Yes, to-morrow," replied the pastor. "And you," he said to Samuel, "can we not over-persuade you? Will not the example of your friend induce you to change your mind?"

"Oh! I," Samuel rejoined, "once I have made a decision, I never swerve from it."

Christiane did not appear to notice the menacing tone in which Samuel had pronounced these words. And in the most natural manner possible, she said: "Ah! there are the horses."

And sure enough, the horses or Julius and Samuel were at the gate ready saddled.

"Lead Monsieur Julius' horse back to the stable," she said to the boy, who stood at the horses' heads.

Samuel sprang into the saddle.

"Well," the pastor said to him, "you have no studies on Sunday. We shall expect you with Monsieur Julius."

"Till Sunday, then," said Samuel. "I shall expect to see you to-morrow, Julius; don't forget Saturday."

And, with a bow to Christiane and her father, he set spurs to his horse and galloped off.

Behind him came the messenger, to whom the pastor gave Julius' letter.

"A hundred florins for you if you are back here to-morrow before mid-day," Julius said to him; "there are twenty-five in advance."

The messenger opened his eyes in amazement, stood stock-still with delight, then suddenly started off at full gallop.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TUGENDBUND

On the Tuesday evening, Julius had not yet returned to Heidelberg. Samuel smiled to himself. He had expected this. Wednesday and Thursday came and went, and yet Julius did not appear. Samuel, absorbed in his feverish love of work, did not notice it. But, on the Friday, when enjoying an hour's rest, he began to get rather anxious. What did this prolonged absence portend? He took up his pen and wrote to Julius:—

"My dear friend,

"Hercules has had the right, up to the present, to spin at the feet of Omphale. But I hope he has not forgotten the work that awaits him to-morrow. Unless Omphale be not Circe, and has not changed him from a man into a beast, he will remember the duty that calls him. A mother comes before a mistress, duty before love. For fatherland and freedom!"

"I am certain now that he will come," Samuel said to himself.

He thought no more of Julius throughout the whole of Saturday. The General Assembly of the Tugendbund was fixed only for midnight.

During the day he sent to enquire after the two wounded men. Franz Ritter and Otto Dormagen were in bed, and, so the doctor said, would be unable to rise for another fortnight. The commands of the Guild had been obeyed. Samuel and Julius could present themselves proudly to their chiefs.

At dusk, Samuel went for his accustomed walk along the road leading to Neckarsteinach, by which Julius should come. At a point where the road branched off, he saw someone coming towards him whom he thought he recognized; but no Julius. He went back to the hotel.

"Is Julius upstairs?" he asked the landlord.

"No, Monsieur Samuel," the man answered.

Samuel went up to his room, and locked himself in, vexed and angry.

"The little one has more influence than I imagined," so ran his thoughts. "I will make her pay for this. The Bible says, "Love strong as death." We shall have to see whether it is."

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock, half-past ten struck. Not a sign of Julius.

At eleven o'clock, Samuel, having given up all hope, prepared to set out alone.

He had taken his cap and was leaving the room, when a hasty step sounded in the corridor. Almost immediately someone knocked.

"Ah! at last!" said Samuel, "that's lucky!" He opened the door. But it was not Julius, it was one of the servants.

"What is it?" said Samuel sharply.

"A student from Leipsic, on tour, asks to see the King of the students."

"I have not time now," replied Samuel. "Let him call to-morrow."

"He is unable to do so. He requested me to tell you that he was on a journey."

At the word "journey," Samuel's face resumed its usual gravity.

"Ask him to come in," he at once said. The servant left the room, the so-called student from Leipsic entered, and Samuel carefully closed the door.

The newcomer grasped Samuel's hands, crossing the thumbs in a particular way, said a few words in a low voice, finally bared his breast and showed him a medal.

"That is all well!" said Samuel. "Besides, I recognise you. You are the Traveller of the Neckar. What have you come to tell me?"

"I bring a counter-order. The General Assembly will not take place to-night."

"Indeed!" said Samuel. "And what is the reason?"

"Because information has been lodged against it, and it would have been surrounded and surprised. Fortunately, one of the high dignitaries had been warned of it in time. The meeting is postponed. There will be a fresh summons."

"At what hour was the information received?" asked Samuel.

"At mid-day."

"That's strange, then," commented the suspicious King of the students. "I met someone at dusk, going towards a certain side of the castle, half hidden in his cloak and with his hat drawn over his eyes, but who, if I mistake not, should be one of our chiefs. What does it mean?"

"I know not, brother; I have fulfilled my duty towards you, and now have only to withdraw."

"But," persisted Samuel, "if, disregarding the warning, I went to the 'rendezvous'?"

"I advise you not to do so; you would find guards in ambush, the police is evidently in possession of the road, and you would stand a good chance of spending twenty years of your life in a State prison."

Samuel smiled haughtily.

"Very well," said he, "thanks, brother."

And he accompanied the traveller to the door.

The man went away, Samuel consulted his watch; it was half-past eleven o'clock.

"I have time," said he to himself.

He put on his cap, took his heavy stick and two pistols, and went out.

As on the first occasion, he made his way direct to the quay, but he ascended the banks of the Neckar very much farther up, and instead of climbing at once the steep ascent, he rounded the castle in order to reach it in the direction opposite to the town.

When he had walked four or five hundred paces beyond the black mass formed by the mountain and the ruin, he stopped, peered into the darkness to discover if anyone was prowling round, saw not a living soul, and retraced his steps straight for the great foundation wall, formerly rising sheer to a great height, now half demolished.

"It was at this corner," he said to himself as he walked along, "that, a little while ago, I met my man. Now, the road he took has no outlet, and ends in a blank wall. Our most illustrious and most mysterious directors must therefore have discovered, like myself, the cave hidden in the undergrowth. As to the police, needless to say that, in accordance with its praiseworthy custom, it remains on that point supremely ignorant, and contents itself with closely guarding the public door through which no one will go in or go out. Splendid institution, equally great among all civilized nations!"

Samuel had reached the foot of the high wall, which was entirely covered with bushes, creepers and ivy. He went to a spot where the vegetation grew thickest, pushed aside, not without wounding his hands, the brambles and ivy, moved away an enormous stone, and after replacing it, descended, or rather tumbled into a kind of cave and soon found himself in the old vaults of this portion of the castle.

But the chiefs of the Tugendbund, granting that Samuel was right in believing them to be there, were not easy to find in the mysterious depths of these immense catacombs. For a long time Samuel walked at random, bruising himself in the darkness against fallen stones, and mistaking for human voices the screams of the night birds, which he had disturbed and which repeatedly struck him sharply in the face with their cramped wings.

"Another would get frightened or tired out, I do believe!" Samuel said to himself.

At last, after groping and stumbling about for half an hour, he caught sight of a feeble glimmer, like that thrown by a muffled lantern.

He walked in that direction, and, his eyes being accustomed to the darkness, he soon perceived, seated in a deep embrasure, three masked men.

When sufficiently near to them, he stopped, held his breath and listened, but in vain; he could hear nothing.

Yet, from the gestures of the three men, it was evident that they were speaking together in low tones.

Samuel approached nearer, stopped a second time, and again listened.

Still he heard nothing.

Suddenly he decided on his course of action.

"It is I!" he cried boldly, "one of you, Samuel Gelb!"

And he advanced towards the three masked men.

At these words, as if moved by one impulse, the three men started up from the blocks of stone on which they sat, and caught hold of pistols which lay beside them ready primed. But where to aim in the dark? Samuel, who saw them, already held a loaded pistol in each hand.

"Ho! there!" he said quietly, "are we going to make a noise and attract the police? Is that your manner of greeting friends? Because I am a friend, I tell you! Samuel Gelb. But let me warn you that I shall defend myself and that, before I die, I shall kill at least one of you. Besides, what will you gain by killing me!"

And as he spoke, he continued to advance. The three masked men yielded, despite themselves, to the influence of his strange, daring recklessness.

The muzzles of the pistols were lowered.

"That's right!" said Samuel.

He uncocked his pistols, replaced them in his pocket, and drew quite near to the three masked figures.

"Unhappy man!" said one of the chiefs, who, by his voice, Samuel recognised as being the one who, on his previous appearance before the conclave, had addressed him in such solemn words, and with such impressive severity, "how have you penetrated hither? Did you not receive the warning? Speak in a low voice, at least."

"I shall speak as low as you please. And, never fear! no one has followed me, and the entrance, which is known to myself alone, I have carefully closed. The notice reached me; but for the very reason that there was no general meeting up yonder, a chance encounter led me to suppose that there would be one down here, perhaps a special meeting in this very cave which I discovered probably long before you. And as you see, my deductions were not far wrong."

"Do you then presume to thrust yourself into the deliberations of the supreme council?"

"I do not presume to thrust myself into anything whatever. Set your minds at rest, I do not come to obtrude myself, but to offer my services."

"How so?"

"It is very certain that the affairs of the Guild are a little disorganised, and that you must be somewhat in difficulties. Well! is it not my right, is it not my duty to redouble in zeal when difficulties accumulate, and to come here and place myself at your disposal?"

"Is this indeed the motive which prompted you to this hazardous proceeding?"

"What other motive could I have? Do you doubt my zeal? You have already tested me, and it appears to me that I have not proved entirely undeserving of your confidence."

The three consulted together for a moment.

Evidently the consultation was favourable to Samuel, for the chief said to him:

"Samuel Gelb, you are a bold comrade. We believe you to be loyal; we know you to be intelligent and brave. It is true that you have rendered a very real service to the Guild; you have valiantly wielded our sword in your duel with traitors, and we regretted being unable to tender you our thanks to-day. Now you have so boldly forced your way to us, we are going to testify our gratitude in some better way than by mere words. We have decided to give you an unprecedented proof of confidence. We will acquaint you with the matter now under discussion, and that appoints you by right an associate of the second degree."

"Thank you," said Samuel, bowing low; "but I swear before God that you will never repent the honour you now do me."

"Well, listen; this is what has happened: One of us, who occupies a very high position in public affairs, has found himself under the necessity of having a watch set upon us to-night. The wounds inflicted on Otto Dormagen and Franz Ritter are largely responsible for this mischance. When it was known that they could not be present at our meeting, it was probably deemed wise to stamp out what could not be supervised, and it was resolved to come to an open rupture with us. Dormagen and Ritter have betrayed the pass-words, and the secrets of the formalities for admission. He among us who had received the order to trap us, could not disobey without betraying his complicity, and without denouncing himself; he was therefore compelled to set the police on our track. But he has had time to warn us. The police guard the passages along which all the adepts were to come; they have the pass-word, and are waiting. They will wait until to-morrow morning; but no one will appear; they will go back as they came, and we have escaped this danger."

"Well!" said Samuel, "it only means that the General Assembly is adjourned, that's all."

"That is no great inconvenience; as a matter of fact," rejoined the chief, "we have no immediate plans in contemplation. At the present time our great enemy, the Emperor Napoleon, is at the zenith of his fame and glory. Our kings and our princes throng his ante-chambers, and their ambition is limited to procuring for themselves an invitation to his hunting parties. Nothing to be done just now for the independence of Germany. But changes may come about. He who has risen may fall. And once a man is on the decline, an unexpected push is sometimes enough to send him to the bottom."

"I heartily hope so," said Samuel, "and should such an occasion present itself, Samuel Gelb will be able to be of still further use to you. But until then, what are your wishes?"

"Until then it is imperative that the Tugendbund hold itself ready for all eventualities, and that its chiefs have some place in which to communicate with the principal adepts. These ruins are no longer safe for us to use. The subterranean vault in which we are at present has but one outlet and we would all be captured, up to the last man. Where will the general meetings take place henceforth? That is the question we were debating when you interrupted us, a question perhaps of life or death. We know of no place that appears to us secure enough."

"It is not, truly, an easy question to solve," said Samuel Gelb.

"Might you by any chance know of a secret place?" resumed the chief. "Have you any knowledge of some impenetrable retreat, rendered secure by numerous outlets, at once closed from espionage and open to flight? If you know of one, you will have rendered to the Guild a fresh service, infinitely superior, indeed, to the first."

Samuel reflected a moment and said:

"You take me unawares. For the moment, I know of none, but I will look out for one, which, with me, means: I shall find one. When I have succeeded, how am I to inform you of it? Assign me a 'rendezvous.'"

"That is impossible. But listen: on the 15th of each month, the traveller of the river on whose banks you reside, will go to you with the question: 'Are you ready?' On the day on which you are, we will see you again."

"Agreed. Thanks, you may rely upon me. Now, having found if not the place, at least the man who will find it for you, you may separate."

"We have no need to bind you to secrecy. This is a matter where your head, as well as our own, is at stake.

Samuel shrugged his shoulders.

Then, at a sign from the chief, he bowed and turned away.

He found his way back more easily than he had come. The moon, shining through the undergrowth, enabled him to dimly discern the egress.

He returned, glad and proud of the step he had gained, his mind full of lofty ambition; and it was only on re-entering his room that his thoughts reverted to Julius.

"Upon my word!" he said to himself, "what the devil is Julius doing? Has this little Christiane really robbed me of this being whom I believed so absolutely my own? Has he too received information at Landeck that the meeting is postponed? And what has he done all the week? However! no use worrying about it. To-morrow is Sunday, I shall know to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXV

VICTORY BY STRATAGEM

WHEN Samuel arrived at the parsonage, at the same hour as on the preceding Sunday, he found the entrance closed. He rang the bell. The little stable boy and the servant appeared.

The lad took charge of his horse, and the servant conducted him to the dining-room.

The table was set, but only for two.

Samuel began to wonder.

The servant had left the room, asking him to wait.

A moment later, the door opened. Samuel advanced; then, on seeing the person who entered, he stepped back in amazement.

It was Baron von Hermelinfeld.

The father of Julius was a man of stern, imposing appearance. [illegible] years or thereabouts, tall, with hair grown white through study, a high forehead, keen, deep-set eyes, a proud, manly bearing, a grave, calm, rather sad look.

He came towards Samuel, who seemed thoroughly taken aback.

"You did not expect to see me again,

especially here, did you, sir?" said he to Samuel.

"Frankly, I did not," he replied.

"Sit down. Kind pastor Schreiber had invited you here to-day. He was loth that you should find the house shut. I remained to welcome you."

"Pardon me! I fail to understand," said Samuel.

"Yes, I daresay my words appear to you enigmatical, do they not?" rejoined Baron von Hermelinfeld.

"If you are curious to solve the riddle, sit down to breakfast with me; I will acquaint you with the facts."

"Certainly," said Samuel, inclining his head.

And putting a bold face on the turn of affairs, he sat down to table opposite to the baron.

There was a pause during which these two men, so closely connected yet so widely opposed, studied each other.

The baron began at last:

"This is what has happened. Help yourself, I pray. You may perhaps be aware that on Monday morning Julius wrote to me. I received his letter at Frankfort. It was a letter full of anxiety and love."

"I surmised as much," said Samuel.

"Julius related to me how he had seen Christiane, and all that she had become to him almost from the first—she, his one love, his life, his dream. He spoke of her grace, of her innocence, of her father, and of the peaceful life he might lead in this quiet family and in this quiet valley.

"Now this is what he had to ask me. Rich, noble, celebrated as I was, would I ever sanction his love for a girl, poor, humble and obscure? You had made him doubt it."

"That's true," said Samuel.

"Julius added, however, that in the event of my refusing, because of her position, he would not do what you suggested; never would he seduce Christiane; he loathed the advice and the adviser.

"No, he would not abuse the generous confidence reposed in him by the daughter and the father, he would not dishonour Christiane, he would not purchase a moment's happiness for himself at the cost of a lifetime of tears for her; he would tear himself away from her dear presence. He would tell Christiane his name, and the decision of his father, and then leave her for ever."

"All that is really very fine," said Samuel. "May I trouble you for a little ham, sir?"

"When I received this letter from Julius, breathing such affection and filial devotion," continued Baron von Hermelinfeld, "I had for four days been reflecting over your bold, blasphemous epistle, for four days I had been debating with myself how in the world I should be able to break the fatal influence which you had usurped over the sensitive, impressionable mind of Julius. And, ten minutes after the receipt of Julius' letter, I had decided what course to pursue.

"We men of an intellectual and scientific turn of mind are usually supposed to be incapable of taking prompt action, for the sole reason that we do not give up our whole existence to the fruitless excitement of those busy men, who, to convince themselves that they are practical, advance the theory that they are nothing if not that. One might as well accuse birds of not knowing how to walk, because they have wings. At one flutter of their wings they cover a hundred yards. We do more in one day than those others in ten years."

"You tell me nothing new, sir," said Samuel; "that has always been my opinion."

"The messenger waited for an answer," resumed the baron, "and was due at Landeck the next day at noon. I told him that there was no answer, and expressed a desire that he should not return before the following evening.

"He refused. Julius had promised him a hundred florins.

"I offered him two hundred. He consented.

"That done, without losing a moment, I went to see Pastor Ottfried, one of the luminaries of the reformed church, and a companion of my boyhood.

"I asked him if he knew Pastor Schreiber.

"He was one of his intimate friends.

"Ottfried described him as simple, modest, disinterested, a heart of gold, his thoughts for ever raised to heaven, seeking there his God, and the spirits of two loved ones gone before, his one aim on earth to relieve the unhappiness of others.

"As to Christiane, Ottfried described her in one word; she was a worthy daughter of the pastor.

"On returning I passed through the Zeile; I ordered post-horses, and, that very night, started for Landeck.

"I arrived there on the Tuesday morning. I put up my carriage at Neckarsteinach; went into nearly every house at Landeck, pursuing my enquiries with regard to Herr Schreiber and his daughter.

"Everyone, without exception, corroborated what Ottfried had told me. Never did a more unanimous chorus of heartfelt benediction ascend from earth, imploring God's blessing on human creatures. The pastor and his daughter were to the honest folk a visible Providence. They were more than the life of this village: they were its soul.

"Ah! whatever you may say, Samuel, virtue brings its own reward. It is glorious to be loved."

"It is also sometimes profitable," said Samuel.

"I retraced my steps and entered the Manse.

"In this room where we now sit, I found Julius, Christiane and the pastor.

"Julius, in utter amazement, exclaimed, 'My father!'

"'Baron von Hermelinfeld!' ejaculated the pastor, no less astonished.

"'Yes, sir, I am Baron von Hermelinfeld, and have the honour of asking the hand of your daughter Christiane in marriage with my son Julius.'

"Herr Schreiber was petrified, believing that he had not heard aright, that he was dreaming or had lost his senses.

"Christiane burst into tears and threw herself into his arms. Without knowing why, he too began to weep and then to smile."

Samuel interrupted the baron.

"It's an affecting scene," said he, "but pass it over. As you know, I am not of a sentimental turn of mind."

Samuel had long since recovered from his surprise. On seeing the baron and hearing his first words, the young man had realised that there was some conspiracy against his influence, and, strife being his natural element, he soon summoned his forces together. Recovering his usual haughty and ironical composure, he listened to what the baron had to say, eating and drinking the while, losing neither a point nor a mouthful, with the most perfectly self-possessed air imaginable.

Baron von Hermelinfeld resumed:

"To be brief. Besides, I am at the end of my story.

"I spent the whole of that day with the happy lovers. Poor children! their happiness repaid me more than enough. They were so grateful, as if the right to undo what God had so well done, had ever lain with me. You know me very little, Samuel, and have formed too low an estimate of my character. I admit that, at times, you have seen me yield to the petty and iniquitous exigencies of the world; but remember this, whilst appearing to submit to them, I waited for an opportunity to make amends. But, let me be frank, let us be just: does not nature seem but too often to decide in favour of society?"

"I understand the delicate allusion, sir," said Samuel bitterly. "Continue."

The baron resumed:

"Why should I have opposed this marriage? Because Christiane is not rich? Julius is rich enough for both. He will have more money than he will know what to do with, when he inherits my brother's fortune. Because Christiane is not highly connected? Was I, twenty years ago?

"But to come to the point. On Wednesday, I returned to Frankfort; Thursday, I was back at Landeck, furnished with both civil and religious licences, and accompanied by my friend Ottfried.

Yesterday morning, Saturday, Julius and Christiane were married by Ottfried at the church of Landeck. You must forgive Julius for not having invited you to his wedding. I was the cause of his not writing.

"An hour after the marriage, Julius and Christiane started on a year's journey. They are going to visit Greece and the East, and will return through Italy.

"Herr Schreiber could not make up his mind to be separated so suddenly from his daughter. He accompanies them with Lothario as far as Vienna by easy stages. There he will part from them and return to his valley home, leaving them to sunshine and love. Well! what do you say to it all, Samuel?"

"I say," said Samuel, rising from the table, "that you have most cleverly juggled me out of Julius. The kidnapping has succeeded. I had strained your generosity and disinterestedness to the utmost; you have made the best of a desperate position. It is a bold stroke, and I confess that I have lost the first rubber. But I shall have my revenge."

He summoned the servant.

"Order my horse round," said he, "I am leaving at once."

The baron smiled.

"Are you going in pursuit of them?"

"Good Heavens!" said Samuel; "I shall wait for them. Thank God, I have something else to do, and I have no intention of giving up my whole life to the sole and petty aim of winning a kind of wager. But everything comes to him who can wait. You and Christiane have scored against me this time; my turn will come. You have finished; I begin."

"I have not finished," retorted the baron. "During the year that they will be absent, I intend to realise one of Julius' dreams. I have not remained here for the sole purpose of keeping you company. At a push, a letter posted in time to reach you this morning, when about to set out, would have spared you the inconvenience of coming such a distance to find only servants in the house. I am expecting an architect from Frankfort. I want to buy, and rebuild within the year, the castle of Eberbach. Thus Julius, instead of the ruins he has left, will find his wish realised and the castle of his dreams firmly established on the mountain. For I desire that he should lack for nothing, either in himself, or in his surroundings, and that the love in his heart be completed by the harmony in his life. My weapon against you will be his happiness."

"Which means that mine will be his misery," replied Samuel. "But I warn you, tender father, though you may do your utmost, you will not rob me of Julius. He admires me, and I love him. Yes, damn it all!" he continued, replying to a gesture of the baron's, "I love him as strong, proud souls know how to love the weak, sensitive souls which belong to them. Too long have I stamped my impress on the mind of your son for you to succeed in effacing it now. You will not change his nature, nor mine. You will not make him energetic, nor me scrupulous. You will rebuild him a castle, will you rebuild him a character? His wavering instincts have need of a firm, harsh hand to uphold and to guide them. Is it a child like Christiane who will be able to do this for him? Before a year is over he will regret me. Run after him? Why should I! It is he who will seek me out."

"Listen, Samuel," said the baron; "you know me to be a man willing at all times to take up a challenge, or enter into contest. Let me tell you one thing: that which Christiane could not tell Julius, she could tell his father, and she has confided in me. Yes, she revealed to me your astounding threats, and, necessarily, I shall act as her second against you."

"Very well! so much the better!" said Samuel; "that will make it all the more comfortable for me."

"No, Samuel, you are unjust to yourself, surely you must be!" rejoined the baron. "You are not so insensible to remorse or, if you prefer it, to appearances. I am determined to leave no stone unturned to bring about a reconciliation between us. Samuel, is it peace? I, too, have perhaps wronged you. I will tear up your letter, and forget your words. You are ambitious and proud; well! I am rich enough and powerful enough to help you without prejudice to Julius. I have, as you know, an elder brother in New York, who has made a fortune in business three or four times larger and more imposing than mine. He has no children, and all he possesses will belong to Julius. His will is made in advance, and I hold a copy of it. I may therefore dispose without scruple of what I have acquired by my own efforts. Samuel, swear to renounce your odious designs and tell me what you want."

"A mess of pottage?" sneered Samuel. "But you choose an inopportune moment at which to bargain with me after Herr Schreiber's copious breakfast. I am no longer hungry, and I maintain my birthright."

The clatter of hoofs was heard beneath the windows of the dining-room, and the servant came to inform Samuel that his horse was at the door.

"Farewell, sir," said Samuel. "I prefer my freedom to your wealth. Never will I allow a millstone to be tied round my neck, were the millstone of gold. Know that I am one of those ambitious spirits who live willingly on dry bread,—one of those proud souls who wear without shame a shabby coat."

"One word more," said the baron. "Observe how, up to the present, your evil designs have turned against you.

The chief reason that induced me to give Julius to Christiane was the letter in which you threatened to take him from me. It is you who have brought about this marriage between these two children; it is your hate which has made their love; your threat which has effected their happiness."

"Very well, then, you should hope for a continuance of my hatred and my threats, since everything I do against them is likely to prove well for them. Your wish will be consummated. Ah! my hatred brings them success! In that case, you may rely on my working for their prosperity. I shall give you so much proof of affection, rest assured! That will be my way of being your son. Not farewell, sir. In a year, perhaps before a year has passed, we shall meet again."

And, bowing to the baron, Samuel went out, with a proud look and threatening air.

Baron von Hermelinfeld let his head fall on his breast.

"Ungodly strife," said he. "He is at war with the world; but am I at peace with the world? And, in Thine impenetrable designs, my God! shall we not be a scourge to each other?"

CHAPTER XXVI

A SURPRISE

THIRTEEN months after the events already related, on the 16th July, 1811, at about half-past ten o'clock in the morning, a post-chaise drove away from the Manse at Landeck, and rolled along the same road where the previous year Julius and Samuel had met Gretchen.

Four persons were in the carriage, or rather, five, if we include a tiny pink and white infant, scarcely two months old, who lay asleep in the arms of his nurse, a handsome, healthy-looking peasant, attired in the striking costume worn by Greek women.

The three other travellers were a very young woman in deep mourning, a young man, and a maid.

Seated at the back of the carriage was a valet.

The young woman was Christiane; the young man, Julius; the infant, their child.

It was for her father that Christiane still wore mourning. Herr Schreiber had been dead already ten months. Through going up into the mountain one stormy night, to administer the last consolations of religion to a dying man, the worthy pastor had contracted the germs of that disease which rapidly brought him to the grave. As Christiane needed him no longer, he thanked God for permitting him to rejoin his wife and his other daughter. Slowly, almost gladly, he faded away. Baron von Hermelinfeld sent for Lothario and to the care of Pastor Ottfried he entrusted the grandson of Pastor Schreiber.

This sad news passed like a black cloud across the dawn of Christiane's happiness. She received the intelligence of her father's death and of his illness at the same moment; it was therefore impossible for her to return and embrace him for the last time. Besides she was already likely to become a mother, and under the circumstances Julius was averse to her travelling any considerable distance. Through excess of precaution, he even refused to continue their journey, and stopped with his beloved in one of the flower-laden Isles of the Archipelago.

The first keen edge of their sorrow gradually wore off. Having now no one in the world but Julius, Christiane lavished all her love upon him, and grief at the loss of her father was by degrees soothed, in the expectation of her child. The mother consoled the daughter.

Thus Julius and Christiane spent the happiest months of their lives, amid all the enchantments which the Orient of the world can add to the Orient of love, their souls steeped in the soft sea-breezes, their pure hearts reflected in the azure of the skies of Greece, their one request of heaven, that this glorious present might last for ever.

Then Christiane became the mother of the little boy whom we have seen asleep in the post-chaise. The doctor advised that, in order to rear the child, it would be wise to return to a temperate climate before the hot weather set in. Julius and Christiane decided therefore to return at once. Landing at Trieste, they travelled by easy stages *viâ* Linz and Würzburg.

But before returning to Frankfort, they wished to pass through Landeck. Naturally, they went first to the cemetery. Christiane prayed and wept at her father's grave. Then she insisted on revisiting the parsonage, which she found occupied by the pastor who replaced Herr Schreiber. This house, where she had lived since childhood and which was now in the possession of strangers, where her memories of the past faded away in the presence of those unknown to her, which held so large a portion of her heart, of her life, of her dreams, and which now belonged to others, this house was painful to her. She suffered more bitterly there than in the churchyard. Her father seemed more dead at the presbytery than at the grave.

Julius hurried her away as quickly as possible.

Thirteen months of married life did not appear to have diminished Julius' love for Christiane. The look he bent upon her was full, if not of the vehement passion of ardent temperaments, at least of all the chivalrous tenderness of loving natures. The husband was still the lover. He tried to distract his dear one from the painful memories aroused by the sight of her old home, by drawing her attention to the valley they were driving through, and which recalled so many happy moments to them both.

Then, he showed her their little child who had just awoke and was gazing at its mother with half-opened and vaguely astonished eyes. He took him from his nurse's arms, and raised the helpless child to Christiane's lips.

"See how free from jealousy I am!" said he. "I myself make you kiss my rival. Because henceforth I have a rival. Two months ago, I was the only one you loved; now there are two of us. You have divided your heart into two parts, and I am not at all sure that he who has the largest share, is not the baby boy."

And, even as he spoke, he himself kissed the child, laughed with him, and made him laugh.

Christiane, grateful for the efforts Julius made to comfort her, tried to smile too.

"But," Julius asked by way of making her talk, "ought we not soon to be at the ruins of Eberbach?"

"Yes, presently," she replied.

Herr Schreiber's successor, during the short conversation they had held together, had said that of course they were going to the Castle of Eberbach. On their answering in the negative, he had asked when they intended going there.

"What for?" Julius had said.

At this question the pastor had seemed surprised, but could not be induced to say anything further, and simply advised them to pass by the ruins. Without understanding what he meant, Julius had seen in this a possible means of rousing Christiane from her sad thoughts, and had told the postillion to drive round by the Mouth of Hell.

Suddenly, as the carriage turned a sharp bend in the road, an exclamation broke from Julius.

"What is the matter?" said Christiane.

"Look up there," said he. "Can I be mistaken? I fancied that the ruins of Eberbach stood there."

"Well?" said she, rousing herself at last from her abstraction.

"Well! do you remember a dream of mine that I told you about among these ruins?"

"You spoke of rebuilding the castle."

"There is our dream realised."

"How strange!" replied Christiane, as surprised as her husband.

In fact, in the place where they had left three tottering, crumbling, half-ruined walls, now stood a newly-built castle, complete and perfect, proudly set upon the rock, rising boldly between the precipice and the sky.

The castle which they now beheld was a square keep, flanked at each of the four corners by a round turret. One was entirely visible to them, as also the pointed roofs of the others. But the trees, already in leaf, hid from them the details.

"If you do not mind, Christiane," said Julius, "I feel curious to know who is the magician whose whim it has been to realize our dream."

"Let us enquire," said Christiane.

The chaise had arrived at the main entrance, an opening in the outer wall like a large breach, and through which the eye lighted on a winding avenue leading to the castle. Julius ordered the postillion to stop. The valet sprang to the ground and rang the bell.

On either side of the entrance were two small lodges, in the style of the Renaissance. A man came out of the lodge on the right and opened the gates.

"To whom does this castle belong?" asked Julius.

"To the Viscont von Eberbach."

"Is he here?"

"No," said the lodge-keeper, "he is travelling abroad."

"May we go over the castle?"

"I will enquire, sir."

Whilst the porter walked towards the castle-keep, Julius cast an eager, jealous eye over this noble dwelling, which had sprung so rapidly from the ground. The sloping avenue was formed out of a portion of the old forest, the architect having cut a clearing in such a manner as to leave a wide lawn between two double rows of large trees. The sward, inundated by high grasses, was like a sea of verdure with islets of flowers.

At the end of this grassy path gleamed the façade of the castle. There was probably another frontage commanding the Mouth of Hell, stern no doubt, proud and forbidding as the abyss over which it towered perpendicularly. But this aspect was peaceful and smiling. A mixture of red sandstone gave a cheerful appearance to the edifice, and took from it the bare, chalky look which results from the whiteness of new stones. Carvings of light foliage, full of nests of birds, ran along the pointed arches of the win dows. And already real live birds were beginning to build their nests in the carved work, so that, hearing little cries issuing from the friezes, one wondered from which nests they came, whether from the nests of moss or from the nests of stone. All this leafage fluttered and rustled in the passing breeze, and Julius was sure he saw one charming little sculptured goldfinch ruffle its granite plumage.

The lodge-keeper returned and asked them to enter.

Julius linked his arm in that of Christiane, and the nurse followed behind with the child. They ascended the avenue of trees, and came to a flight of steps in wrought stone, with a carved balustrade in trefoil, at the top of which opened, in an inner wall, a great arched oaken door, studded with chased nails. They passed through two or three doors or courtyards more. Then the lodge-keeper showed them into the castle.

After crossing the threshold, one seemed quickly transported from the present into the past. The middle ages were revived in the arrangement and furniture of the rooms. Each had its speciality; one was devoted to armour, another to tapestries. There was one in which stood huge chests crammed with goblets, tankards and enormous cups. Another was a perfect museum adorned with magnificent paintings by Holbein, Albert Dürer and Lucas van Leyden. Daylight filtered into a chapel through the brilliant colouring of the finest glass windows of the day. What clever artist, what archæologist-poet, what precursor-antiquary, anticipating, so early as 1811, the great Gothic movement of 1830, had so completely restored the past ages? Julius was struck with admiration and surprise. It was the perfect restoration of four vanished centuries, from the twelfth to the sixteenth. At the end of the armoury there was a closed door. Julius asked the porter to unlock it.

"I have not the key of the private apartments," the man replied.

But just then the door opened.

"I have it," said a voice.

It was Baron von Hermelinfeld.

CHAPTER XXVII

FOR WHOM THE CASTLE WAS BUILT

THE baron held out his arms to his son and daughter and embraced them tenderly.

The first impression experienced by the baron, Julius and Christiane was one of joy, the second was one of astonishment.

How came the baron to be there, and how came the keys of the castle in his possession! The baron was no less surprised than Julius. He had not expected his son so soon. Julius, wishing to give him a surprise, had not informed him of his arrival. It was indeed some time since the baron had received news from the young couple. The last letter that Julius had written him dated as far back as Christiane's confinement.

So, after an interchange of loving greetings, a whole volley of questions was poured out. The baron thought Christiane looking sweet and fair, so effectually had Julius, with loving solicitude, sheltered her from the southern sun. But the child came in for the largest share of attention. The grandfather never wearied of kissing his grandson. He thanked Christiane for having called the child Wilhelm after him. Wilhelm was not yet christened, they had waited until their return home, in order that the baron might be his sponsor.

Then it was the turn of the travellers to question the baron.

"But how comes it, father, that you are as free here at the Viscont von Eberbach's as in your own house?"

"Bless me!" replied the baron, "the Viscont von Eberbach is an intimate friend of mine."

"I had never heard you mention him, father, and I believed the house of Eberbach to be extinct."

"The best proof that a Viscont von Eberbach exists, is that this is his castle, and the proof that I know him is that, if you wish, I will do the honours in his absence."

They went into the room which the baron had opened, and, having visited the state apartments, passed into the private portion of the castle.

These rooms combined at once every modern comfort with Gothic splendour, spacious, to be cool in summer, thick-walled and well-built, to be warm in winter.

There were stoves and fireplaces everywhere, so that added to the warmth of a fire was the cheerfulness of a blaze.

The view of the surrounding country was magnificent. The windows commanded the finest and most varied landscape in the world; some overlooking the river, others the mountain. Through one of these, Christiane caught sight of Gretchen's hut. But the hut, like the ruins, was rebuilt. The wonderful architect, who, in so short a time, had reared from the ground and from the past, this enormous pile, had had no difficulty in erecting a cottage into the bargain.

"Gretchen! how I should like to see her," said Christiane.

"We have only to send for her," said Julius.

"Just now," replied the baron, "she is probably in the forest with her goats. When she returns she shall be told."

At last, there remained but two rooms to visit: the baron opened them. In one, a bed in carved oak with hangings of red damask; in the other, an inlaid bed with pink silk curtains.

Between the two rooms, a library, a study in the most severe style, overlooking the mountain, and an oratory-boudoir in exquisite taste, commanding a view of the Neckar.

Julius sighed. He could not refrain from thinking that these two rooms seemed made purposely for Christiane and himself. Alas! someone more fortunate than he had accomplished his wish and robbed him of his dream.

The baron smilingly said to Julius:

"You seem to envy the man who owns this castle."

"I do not envy him; I congratulate him."

"You think then that one could be happy here?"

"If not here, nowhere!" said Julius.

"And you feel convinced that, if you lived here with your wife and child, you would regret nothing, and wish for nothing?"

"What more could I wish for?"

"Well! my dear Julius, my sweet Christiane, be happy together. You are in your own home."

"What!" said Julius, scarce knowing what he said in his joy, "this beautiful castle . . . . . ?"

"It belongs to you."

"But," Julius objected, not daring to believe in the truth of what he heard, "the Viscont von Eberbach . . . . ."

"Is you! On New Year's day of the present year, His Majesty, the King of Prussia, when conferring on me the Order of Merit of the first rank, was graciously pleased to make me Graf von Eberbach, and has settled on you in succession the castle, also the surrounding meadows and woods, which likewise belong to you."

"My dear father!"

"How can we prove our gratitude?" said Christiane.

"By being happy," said the baron. "That is all I ask. But this much I deserve, for it has not been without trouble that I have compassed this reconstruction within a year. I held to giving you this surprise. The architect has proved himself a genius. I was doubtful of him at first. He submitted some Greco-Roman designs, which harmonised but ill with the old substructions dating from the days of Barbarossa. But it appears that he discovered at the library in Heidelberg the original plans of the ancient castle. Then he came across some young fellow, a learned antiquarian I believe, who has thrown himself heart and soul into this resuscitation.

"He had the knowledge, I had the money, in consequence things have succeeded wonderfully well. Even to the smallest details, to the furniture, the locks, the fire-irons, all is pure mediæval, is it not? We shall have to congratulate this unlooked-for coadjutor on his masterpiece.

"Curiously enough I have not yet seen him. My time being fully occupied, I could only come occasionally to see how the work was progressing, and, then was unfortunate; whenever I came, invariably he had just gone. However, I am not altogether sorry, before complimenting him as he deserves, to have your opinion. Now that you are here, you will invite him, and receive him as our guest."

"But," said Christiane, "you must have ruined yourself?"

"I confess," the baron answered gaily, lowering his voice, "that I have considered your delight more than my purse, and that this folly almost drained my resources. My architects became each day increasingly eager, and, as their expenditure was reasonable from three points of view—history, art, and my love for you—I let them have their own way. Fortunately I found an auxiliary to my extravagance, and you have not only me, my children, to thank and to scold."

CHAPTER XXVIII

AGAINST WHOM THE CASTLE WAS BUILT

"TO whom else then are we indebted, father?" said Julius, "for the magic of this rapid and magnificent reconstruction?"

"To your uncle Fritz, Julius," replied the baron. "Listen to this extract from a letter which I received from New York two months ago:—

"'My fortune is unreservedly yours, my dear and illustrious brother. I have no other child but your son Julius. Permit me then to contribute half towards the gift you are making him. I enclose in this a cheque for five hundred thousand thalers, drawn on my bankers, Braubach, of Frankfort. Should this amount not be sufficient, draw upon me at sight, for the sum necessary, simply advising me a month in advance.

"'I am proud and happy, Wilhelm, by sending you this practical assistance, to have it in my power to further the glory of our house. We two have fully accomplished our father's wish! but I shall merely have brought the family wealth, you will have brought it fame.

"'You tell me that I should rest. I am, in fact, somewhat weary. But, by this time next year, I shall have settled up my affairs and liquidated *our* fortune, which will probably amount, exclusive of what I send you, to five million francs. Will that be enough? If you reply in the affirmative, then, after this space has elapsed, I shall return home, to dear old Europe, dear old Germany. So keep a corner for me in this castle that you are having built. I should be sorry to die without seeing you and Julius again . . . '"

"Dear uncle!" said Julius. "How we will welcome him and love him!"

"So, as you see, Julius, it is thanks to him that I have been able to settle this succession upon you, and to complete the building of this castle . . . "

"Ah! with this princely fortune we shall be able to live like real burgraves," Julius gaily said, "raise our own troops, arm our battlements, and, if needs be, hold our own against the enemy."

"Do not joke!" said the baron. "There is an enemy against whom this castle has been constructed."

"Indeed! who is this enemy?"

"Samuel Gelb."

"Samuel Gelb?" Julius replied with a laugh.

"I repeat that I am in earnest," rejoined the baron.

"What do you mean, father?"

"You have assured me, Julius, that here you would neither regret nor wish for anything. It was in the hope of this, my son, that I planned out this castle for you. I was desirous of making your life so full and so happy that you would not feel the need of anyone. Tell me that I have succeeded, and promise me not to see Samuel again."

Julius made no reply.

However strong his respect and affection for his father, he was inwardly humiliated and vexed at this request. Was he still a child, that the influence of another's will upon his own was to be so greatly dreaded? Samuel was the companion of a lifetime, full of wit, of learning and of energy, whom he had longed for more than once, he admitted secretly to himself, even in all the delights of his travels. If one had treated the other badly, it was not Samuel; he had not been married without even letting his old friend know; he had not buried himself for a whole year without sending even a line to let his bosom friend know that he was alive.

"You do not reply?" said the baron.

"What pretext could I have, father," Julius answered at last, "for closing my doors against the companion of my childhood, with whom, after all, I have no fault to find except that he holds theories more or less paradoxical?"

"Do not close your doors against him, Julius. But do not write to him, do not invite him. That is all I ask. Samuel is proud, he will not come unasked. He wrote me an insolent letter a year ago, and I have not heard from him since."

"Even if I did see him," Julius again demurred, "I am not eight years of age to let myself be led blindfold by another. Were Samuel as bad as you deem him to be, surely, I have arrived at years of discretion, and I can take the good and leave the evil."

The baron rejoined solemnly:

"Julius, you believe in my affection for you, do you not? and you do not think me a man who would be foolishly obstinate over a childish caprice. Well! Julius, I ask you, as a favour, not to see Samuel again. I beseech you to accede to my request. Rest assured that there is some grave reason for my advice, my entreaty. I can remain with you only a few days, then I shall have to return to Berlin. Do not let me go away with this anxiety. No, I do not say this from any petty spite against Samuel, or unjustifiable mistrust of you. I have more serious reasons. Put more confidence, my son, in the experience and affection of your father. Set my mind at rest, and give me your promise not to write to Samuel. Christiane, do you not wish him to promise me this?"

Christiane, who had turned pale and trembled at the words of the baron, drew near to Julius coaxingly, placed her two hands on his shoulder, and looking up into his face beseechingly and tenderly.

"Oh!" said she, "for myself, so long as I have my Wilhelm, and so long as Julius loves me, this beautiful home is enough for me without anyone else. And you, Julius, besides me, you have your father!"

"Upon my word! Christiane, do you also wish it?" said Julius. "So be it, then, since such is your desire; I shall not write to Samuel."

"Thank you!" said Christiane.

"Thank you!" said the baron. "Now it only remains for you to take possession of your new home."

The afternoon passed in settling into the castle, and making plans for the future.

Lothario, for whom Christiane had, with true motherly instinct, at once enquired, could not, just then, have his studies interrupted, as Pastor Ottfried had arranged that he should pursue them with his own grandchildren; but, within a month, he would come to the castle to spend his holidays with his sister Christiane.

The servants, chosen by the baron, were already at their posts, and after dinner the new arrivals took a stroll round the gardens, and, quickly acclimatised to happiness, it seemed to them, when evening came, as if the castle had always been their home.

Christiane, being tired with the journey, retired early. The baron and Julius soon followed her example.

Before retiring to his room, Julius, as he passed, glanced into his library. On the carved oak book-shelves was a valuable collection of books, beautifully bound and emblazoned with his coat-of-arms. But what struck him most was the choice of the volumes. Who then had been able to guess his taste so well, without making even a single mistake as to his favourites? Had he himself drawn up the list, he would not have altered a single title. Samuel, who knew all his favourite authors, through having himself developed his taste for literature, would not have chosen differently.

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder.

He started; he had not heard the door open.

He turned round and saw Samuel Gelb.

"Well! has my dear Julius had a happy year and enjoyed his tour abroad?"

"Samuel!" exclaimed Julius, both astonished and delighted. "Samuel! but how came you here?"

"'Pon my soul," said Samuel; "for the very simple reason that I live here."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ENEMY WITHIN THE FORTRESS

WAS it instinct, presentiment, or the vague fears of a woman? Christiane, in this beautiful and majestic castle, felt a dread of something. She felt as if surrounded by some danger. Did it threaten her or Julius? It mattered not! She thought regretfully of their blissful, quiet life together in the happy perfumed island, where neither the cares of the world nor the passions of men had for a moment disturbed their peace of mind. Yet, in what way, apparently, had her life changed? Her husband loved her devotedly; she worshipped her child. What had she to wish for? What need she fear?

Baron von Hermelinfeld had to return at the end of a few days to Berlin, whither his duties and his work called him. But, before leaving the castle, he took Christiane aside and said to her:

"My dear child, it is perfectly true that for thirteen months I have seen nothing of Samuel Gelb. But, thirteen months ago, on the morning after you left, I did see him. And he refused to withdraw, in fact, if anything, he persisted even more strongly in his bold declaration of war against you. However, for the present let us hope that this was nothing but insolent bravado. Should it prove otherwise, Christiane, if the enemy dares to re-appear, remember, my child, that I am your champion and your second. Send for me and I will come to you at once."

This promise had only half reassured Christiane. She had tried, by questioning Gretchen, to extract from her whether she had seen Samuel again since the scene at the ruins. But, on that subject, Gretchen gave but vague and evasive replies.

The reader must know that Christiane had found the little goat-herd as devoted no doubt, but perhaps even wilder than in the past. Herr Schreiber being dead and Christiane away, Gretchen had quite lost touch with social life, and consequently, had devoted herself entirely to her plants and her animals. It was even more difficult to accustom her to the castle than to the parsonage. Even her hut no longer gave her pleasure since it had been rebuilt; she thought it too grand, too near to the castle, too like the houses in the village. She buried herself in the mountain with her goats, and sometimes did not return for days together.

Christiane was therefore compelled to stifle her fears in her own breast, this being all the more difficult because they were so vague and so gloomy; what is more to be feared than the unknown? And, hardest thing of all to this loving nature, Julius was the last to whom, on this subject, she could or would unburden herself.

Christiane had already suffered on seeing the resistance which Julius had opposed to his father on the subject of Samuel, and the reluctance with which he had finally yielded. She was not then all-sufficient to him? She was not everything to him? And the aversion which, from the very first, she had shown for Samuel, had evidently not rendered him repulsive or unpleasant to his friend.

Still, with that promptitude of love to justify the one beloved, Christiane afterwards found excuses for Julius' opposition, by attributing to it the legitimate sensitiveness which any man would feel at being supposed to depend on a comrade, and have no will of his own. Assuredly, it was not Samuel Gelb he had defended, it was himself, and Christiane ended by thinking he was right, and that, in his place, she would have acted in the same way.

Moreover, her refuge, her consolation, her safeguard was her son. Seated beside Wilhelm's cradle, she forgot everything. It was a sweet yet touching picture to behold this child the mother of a child, the still closed bud issued from the scarce-opened bud. Christiane, seen without her child, had retained the grace, the timidity, the candour of maidenhood; but when she gazed at her boy, when she caressed him, when she held him in her arms, her son, her love, her Jesus, then how unmistakably was she a mother!

Her great grief was that she was not able to nurse the dear babe! The doctors had deemed her too young and too delicate, and Julius had agreed with what they said. Oh! if they had listened to the mother, she would have found the necessary strength! She envied, she hated, almost as much as she watched over and tended, that nurse, that rival, that foreign woman, that strong, stupid peasant to whom she, Christiane, was forced to resign the sweetest part of her motherhood. What right had this stranger to suckle her child? When the nurse gave the breast to Wilhelm, she would look at her with sad, jealous eyes. She would have given years of her existence to be the source of life to those sweet lips.

This mother of sixteen years gave, however, everything but this to her son; her days, her nights, her soul, her heart, her whole being, all was his. It was she who bathed him, dressed him, cradled him, sang to him, put him to sleep. He knew her, how sweet the thought, better than his nurse, to whom the mother resigned him only long enough for her to feed him. She insisted that his cradle be placed beside her bed; the nurse slept in another bed made up every night in Christiane's own room. Thus not a movement, not a breath, not a cry of the child's escaped the mother.

And so, when she thought of Samuel, with Wilhelm in her arms, already she felt reassured. The unknown menace of the dark enemy faded by degrees from her mind, and, like darkness before dawn, disappeared in her love for her child.

One morning, Julius, coming into Christiane's room, found her sitting beside the cot, which she gently rocked from side to side with a light, even touch. She placed her finger to her lips to enjoin silence, put up her face to receive his kiss, and beckoned him to a low chair beside her. Then, in a half-whisper, she said:

"I am anxious; Wilhelm has slept badly, he was moaning and has been very restless. I do not know what ails him. He has just fallen asleep. Speak softly."

"You alarm yourself unnecessarily," Julius replied. "The boy has never looked more rosy nor more bonny."

"You really think so? Perhaps you are right. I am always anxious where he is concerned."

With her left hand she drew Julius' head on to her shoulder, still rocking the cradle with her right.

"I am happy thus," said she, "between my two dear ones. Ah! if even one of the two were taken from me, I think I should die."

"So you admit," said Julius, shaking his head, "that now only half of your heart belongs to me?"

"Ungrateful boy! is he not part of you?"

"Since he is asleep," rejoined Julius, "let me have you all to myself for at least a little while."

"Oh! no, he must feel himself rocked the whole time."

"Well! tell the nurse or Veronique to rock him."

"He must feel himself rocked the whole time by me, sir."

"What nonsense!"

"Well! try."

She relinquished the cradle to Julius, who swayed it from side to side as gently as possible. But the child awoke and began to cry.

"There! you see!" said Christiane with a triumphant look.

After half-an-hour spent in this fond, foolish bantering, Julius went back to his study. But he had not been there more than twenty minutes, when Christiane entered, in a state of great agitation.

"The child is undoubtedly ill," she said; "he has refused the breast, and does nothing but cry and scream. Then, it seems to me he is somewhat feverish. You must send for a doctor, Julius dear."

"Of course," said Julius; "but I fear there is not one at Landeck."

"A groom can ride over to Neckarsteinach. He will be back in two hours. I will go myself and give instructions."

She despatched the messenger and returned to the room; there she found Julius, beside the child, who was crying incessantly.

"Is he no better? My God! how I wish that doctor had arrived!"

"Patience!" said Julius.

Just then the door opened and Samuel Gelb entered with a quick step, as if he were expected.

"Monsieur Samuel!" Christiane exclaimed in amazement.

CHAPTER XXX

SAMUEL AS PHYSICIAN

SAMUEL bowed gravely to Christiane. Julius, who, strangely enough, showed no surprise at seeing him, went up and shook him by the hand.

"You are more than half a doctor," said he, "can you do anything for our little one? he is ill."

Samuel silently examined the child, then, looking round, he perceived the nurse, went up to her and felt her pulse.

"But sir," said Christiane, whose anxiety was stronger than her fear, "it is not the nurse who is ill, but the child."

"Madame," Samuel replied coldly but politely, still continuing his examination. "The mother sees only the child, the doctor looks for the cause. The indisposition of your little one is but the result of the indisposition of his nurse. The poor little lad is hungry, that is all, and this woman cannot suckle him. Change of climate and customs, 'ennui,' homesickness, who knows what? have dried up her milk. She must be replaced at once."

"Replaced? By whom?" asked Christiane.

"Is there no nurse in the neighbourhood?"

"Good heavens! I do not know. Oh! I am a very careless mother, or at least a very inexperienced one. You must not be too hard upon me, sir."

The child still cried and whimpered.

"Do not be anxious, madame," Samuel resumed in the same frigidly polite tone, "the child is by no means ill, and in no danger whatever. You can do this. Take one of Gretchen's young goats as foster-nurse."

"Will it be advisable for Wilhelm?"

"He will thrive splendidly on it. But, when once you have begun, you will have to continue. Too frequent changes of milk might be injurious. Then, a goat is a nurse that will not suffer from nostalgia."

Julius despatched a messenger for Gretchen, who arrived almost directly.

She too showed no surprise at seeing Samuel. But Christiane, who was watching her, noticed a bitter smile curve her lips.

Her delight, however, soon returned when she was told that one of her goats was to feed little Wilhelm. She had just the very one needed, young and strong and with good rich milk. She hurried away to fetch it.

During her absence Samuel succeeded in reassuring Christiane. His manner was totally different, though perhaps no more reassuring. A sort of respectful, but icy reserve had replaced his proud, bitter scorn.

Gretchen returned with a fine goat, white and clean, whom she made lie down on the carpet. The child was placed beside it, and at once took his nourishment quite naturally.

Christiane clapped her hands.

"The difficulty is solved!" said Samuel, smiling.

Christiane could not refrain from bestowing on him a look of gratitude.

This strange man added in a pensive tone:

"I love children. I wish I had one. They are charming and not proud; weak and not wicked. I love children; they are not yet men."

He rose as if to depart.

"You will stay to breakfast with us?" said Julius to him.

"I cannot do so," Samuel replied, looking at Christiane.

Julius insisted. But Christiane said nothing. The past, which she had forgotten in the first impulse of motherhood, returned to her memory, and the woman re-appeared beneath the mother.

Samuel seemed conscious of Christiane's silence, and replied more drily to the entreaties of Julius:

"Impossible. Order a horse round for me. I will send him back to you from Neckarsteinach."

Julius complied reluctantly. Christiane, no longer troubled by the fear that Samuel would remain, felt more free to thank him, and when the servant announced that the horse was ready, she went with Julius to the entrance to see him off and again thanked him.

But she did not invite him to return.

And, as he mounted his horse, she whispered to Julius:

"Why is Monsieur Samuel Gelb here, and how did he come, Julius?"

"Upon my word of honour," replied Julius, "I know no more than you."

Samuel bowed and galloped off.

"He is gone!" said Christiane, as if relieved.

Gretchen was, just then, leaving the house with her goat. She overheard Christiane's remark, and shook her head: "Ah!" said she, in a low voice, "do you really believe he has gone!"

CHAPTER XXXI

BY WHOM THE CASTLE WAS BUILT

A FEW mornings later, the sun lighted up a charming group, near the castle of Eberbach.

Ten yards distance from Gretchen's hut, now entirely rebuilt as a rustic cottage, on a sloping emerald lawn, made in the rock itself with artificial earth, sat Christiane and Gretchen on a seat sheltered by the overhanging rock. At their feet lay a white goat, suckling a lovely child, who lay half-naked on a rug, covered over with a fine white cloth; the animal was eating grass from Gretchen's hand, and seemed to understand that it must not move during its nurseling's meal. Christiane, armed with a twig, chased away the flies that incessantly teased the poor, patient beast. After awhile the child, evidently satisfied, closed its eyes and fell asleep.

Then Christiane, without waking him, raised him gently on to her knee.

The goat, as if relieved from the responsibility of the child, started up, leapt about as if to stretch its cramped limbs, then rejoined its companion, whose fine intelligent head had just peeped out from between the shrubs.

"And you say, madame," continued Gretchen, resuming their conversation, "that he appeared amongst you quite suddenly, even the lodge-keeper not having seen him pass?"

"Yes! You were quite right in saying that he was never so near as when we imagined him far away."

Gretchen sat pensive awhile.

"Oh! yes!" she resumed, in a tone of excitement peculiarly her own, "this man is undoubtedly a devil. I have felt certain of it for over a year."

"Then you have seen him during the past year? He has been here again? Speak, I beseech you. You are aware how important it is that I should know."

Gretchen appeared to hesitate a moment; then, apparently making up her mind, she drew nearer to Christiane.

"Will you promise me not to reveal to the baron what I am about to tell you? Swear it, that I may speak plainly and perhaps save you."

"Why this oath?"

"Listen. Some days after your departure, my wounded roe, in spite of my care, lay dying in terrible agony.

"The herbs I had placed on the wound, my prayers to the Virgin, nothing availed. She looked at me with pathetic eyes, as if imploring me not to let her die! I was in despair. Three or four strangers passed my hut, walking in the direction of the castle. Samuel Gelb was among them. He looked up, saw me, and in three quick strides he had reached my side.

"I pointed to my poor dying roe, and said 'You brute!'

"'What!' said he, 'you allow your goat to die, you, with such a knowledge of herbs?'

"'Is there any chance of saving her life?' I cried.

"'Undoubtedly!'

"'Oh! save her!'

"He looked steadily at me and said:

"'Let us strike a bargain.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'I shall often have to come to Landeck, and I do not wish it known. I shall arrange in such a manner as not to pass by the Manse, therefore Herr Schreiber will not see me. But so far as you are concerned, your hut is so close to the ruins that I cannot avoid you. Promise me that, neither directly nor indirectly, will you let Baron von Hermelinfeld know that I come to this part of the country, and I, in return, will undertake to cure your roe.'

"'And supposing that you do not cure her?'

"'Then you are at liberty to speak.'

"I was about to promise, but some scruple made me hesitate. Turning to him I said:

"'What you intend to do, will it injure my neighbour in this world, or my soul in the next?'

"'No,' he answered.

"'Then I will keep silence.'

"'You promise that neither directly nor indirectly shall the Baron von Hermelinfeld know through you of my presence at Landeck?'

"'I promise.'

"'Very well! I shall not be gone long, meanwhile have some boiling water ready.'

"He went away, but returned a few moments later with some herbs which he did not allow me to see, but plunged at once into the boiling water. He then applied them to the wounded leg and bandaged it tightly.

"'You are not to change this dressing for three days,' he said. 'After that, your roe will limp, but will be cured. But, if you break your word I will kill her.'

"That is why, madame, I ask you not to mention a word of what I am going to tell you to the baron, so that he may not hear of it indirectly through me."

"Do not be anxious," said Christiane, "I swear not to say a word. But tell me all about it."

"Well, your castle, madame, this castle which has been given you by your father, and in which you live to-day, I believe Monsieur Samuel is the actual builder of it."

Christiane shuddered. Samuel's sudden appearance at the castle rushed into her mind.

"But how could it be he?" she asked.

"Who but he, dear madame," Christiane went on, "would have been able to make this castle spring out of the earth in so short a time? As you see, he is the devil! Unless it were so, despite the crowd of workmen employed, would he have been able to raise these dead ruins from the dust in eleven months? And how did he superintend the work? He was everywhere and nowhere. He lived, without doubt, somewhere in the neighbourhood, because the moment he was wanted, he was there to the very second; and yet, where did he live? Neither at Landeck, nor at the parsonage, nor here. . . . . And he had no horse!

"How had he come? No one could say. Who had brought him hither? When my lord the baron came to see how the work was progressing he was never visible. The baron has never had the least suspicion that he was connected with it in any way. And how did Monsieur Samuel compel the architect not to mention it? In the daytime he went for long excursions up the mountain, under pretext of studying and botanizing, as he says. And then he has had excavations made under the rock on which the castle is built, he has dug up the ground and hollowed it out in all directions. I cannot imagine what he was plotting down there. You will again wonder if I am mad; but one evening, on stooping to listen, I feel convinced that I heard something like the neighing of a horse under ground."

"You must have dreamt this, or it is a fairy tale," said Christiane.

Gretchen went on.

"Shall I give you a more certain proof, madame? One day I noticed that he was having stone foundations laid quite near to my old hut. I could not understand what that meant. However, early next morning, as I noticed that my goats were frightened by his workmen, I took my poor beasts up into the mountain, and did not return until late that night. My hut had disappeared, and in its place I found this cottage, arranged and furnished as you now see it. Tell me, does this not appear to you like witchcraft? That man Samuel was there. He told me that this alteration had been made according to instructions given to the architect by my lord the baron. Be that as it may, that does not explain how this building could be completed in twelve hours. Well, madame, you may say what you please, my new cottage is decidedly more convenient, and especially more substantial than the other, that I do not deny. Yet, I regret the other; I am afraid in this one, and there are times when I almost feel as if I were living in a house built by the devil."

"What you tell me is, in fact, most strange," said Christiane; "and although I do not share your superstitious fears with regard to Monsieur Samuel, yet, like you, I should feel somewhat uneasy if I had to live in a house which he had built. But tell me one thing. Whilst we were abroad, when you saw him again, did he renew his threats, or was he in any way insolent?"

"No, on the contrary, he was kind and thoughtful. He knows more about the virtues and properties of plants than I do, although he will not admit what I believe—that they have a soul. Often has he told me of cures for my sick animals."

"Then I see that you have somewhat modified your opinion of him?"

"I wish I had, but I cannot do so. I have not known him do or say anything wrong during the whole year. Quite the reverse. But the flowers and plants persist in saying that he is fatal, fatal to those I love, to you and to your husband. And the flowers have never lied. He must have some deep-laid scheme. He pretends to have forgotten everything, in order to surprise us unawares. Whenever I see him, I cannot help it, the same feeling of anger comes over me. Although I try to overcome it, and remind myself of the many kindnesses he has done me, yet I who have never hated anyone before, I think I actually hate him. But I should not say so aloud; because he is a wizard, he will know, he will know that I have told you all, that I hate him, that . . . ."

"That mothers are the most ungrateful beings in existence," Samuel Gelb said suddenly and quietly behind the two women.

Gretchen and Christiane turned round. Christiane could not suppress a cry. Wilhelm awoke screaming.

Samuel looked at Christiane with a grave, severe look; but there was nothing scornful nor ironical in his manner. In his right hand he held a white felt hat which he had just raised from his head, his gun was in his left. A black velvet coat buttoned up to the chin heightened the cold deadly pallor of his face.

Where had he come from? Behind the bench on which Christiane and Gretchen sat, the rock rose perpendicularly fifty feet high.

"Why this alarm?" Samuel asked quietly. "Look, you have made your child cry."

Gretchen was still trembling:

"By which road did you gain access here?" said she. "Whence do you come?"

"In fact, sir, how did you get here?" asked Christiane.

CHAPTER XXXII

DEFIANCE

"HOW have I come, madame?" said Samuel, replying to Christiane's question. "Are you truly under the impression, as is Gretchen, that I come from hell? Alas! I am neither as supernatural nor as wonderful a being. But you were so absorbed in speaking ill of me that you neither saw nor heard me come. That is all."

Christiane, slightly reassured, pacified Wilhelm, who soon fell asleep again. Samuel resumed:

"Well, apparently my advice was good, for Wilhelm is better."

"That's perfectly true, sir, and with all my heart do I thank you."

"As to you, Gretchen, your favourite would be dead had I not cured her. Your goats were threatened with sickness and you would have lost almost every one of them but for the invaluable remedy I gave you."

"That is true!" said Gretchen, with a fierce look. "But whom have you learnt all these secrets from?"

"Even were it from Satan, as you suppose, you should both feel all the more grateful to me for having lost my soul for your sakes; instead of which you hate me. Is that just?"

"Monsieur Samuel," said Christiane gravely, "you it is who wish us to hate you; for my own part I would be only too glad to hold you in esteem. You certainly possess a singular power. Why, instead of applying it to wrong purposes, do you not apply it to what is right?"

"I will do so, madame, when you have taught me what is right and what is wrong. Is it wrong for a man to think a woman beautiful? for him to contemplate with delight her fair pale loveliness? to think, despite himself, that he who possesses this exquisite creature is happy beyond measure! Take yourself, for example. Let us suppose that I love you. Would it be wrong? Julius loved you, and you thought it right.

"How comes it that what was right for him would be wrong for me? No, the right is that which the mind desires, that which nature permits. Why are you not able to love to-day a man whom you could have loved fifteen months ago? Is virtue then a matter of date?"

Christiane bent over her child and kissed him, as if to shelter the woman behind the mother.

Having regained her composure, she turned to him:

"I shall not reply to your sophistry, sir. Not only from duty, but from my own free will, do I love Julius. I wish to love him only."

"You wish to love him?" said Samuel, still in the same studiously polite tone.

"Oh! you are quite right, madame. Julius deserves it. He has many qualifications. No one can deny that he is affectionate, tender, unselfish and intellectual—any more than anyone can affirm that he has the initiative, the energy, the magnetic power that I possess. Now, have you the power to refuse to acknowledge and appreciate that strong vitality which is mine. Pardon my making no pretence at modesty, but modesty is a lie, and I never tell a lie. Well! I venture to say that there have been times when, although fearing me, you have admired me. And Julius, come, I was not with you on your travels, but in your heart you cannot refute my plain speaking. Notwithstanding the passionate love Julius has for you, he felt bored—excuse the word—more than once during that year. How could it be otherwise! he has no notion how to guide his life, it is life that guides him. Look you! man's greatest virtue is will power. Without this, intellect and goodness can accomplish nothing. You, you are a woman, exempt from the need of will power, but your nature demands it in the man who is your protector. You fail to find it. In consequence of which you have no hold over Julius, and Julius cannot keep you. Your influence over him is of the heart, mine is of the mind. Summary of my philosophy and of the situation: You are a woman, he is womanly. Consequently he belongs to me . . . . I dare not say: consequently, you . . . ."

"Indeed, you will do well not to say it, sir," Christiane quickly interrupted, galled beyond measure. "Do not say it, unless you wish to remind me of your insufferable insolence in the past."

But Samuel drew himself up, a white, angry, threatening, sinister look on his face.

"Madame, which of us two has most to fear in recalling memories of the past? Fourteen months ago, when I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, I neither thought of you, sought you out, nor injured you in any way; yet I was so unfortunate as to incur your displeasure. Why? For no reason; perhaps because of my appearance, my face, my smile, how can I tell? Gretchen spoke against me to you; you spoke against me to Julius. You yourself have admitted this. The wolf let the sheep alone, the vulture did not trouble about the dove. But the dove, the sheep provoked the vulture and the wolf. You wounded me in my vulnerable point, pride. You defied me with your hatred, I defied you with my love. And you accepted the challenge: kindly remember that. Also, you began the struggle at once; you prevailed upon Julius to remain at Landeck when I wanted to take him back to Heidelberg. Your first victory, which was quickly followed by a second equally important. A formidable and powerful ally came to your assistance in the person of Baron von Hermelinfeld, who brought about your marriage with Julius, much less for the sake of Julius than against Samuel. This he himself acknowledged. I find myself therefore humiliated, vanquished, defeated. You carried off your Julius for one whole year a thousand leagues away from me, and you combated his remembrance of me by means of your kisses, whilst his father, in order to confine Julius in his paradise and secure him against me, his evil genius, caused this most inaccessible castle to be built at an enormous expense.

"Thus, your love, your marriage, your journey, your child, and I believe this castle, with double walls and double moat, and an expenditure of three millions, all that has been done, plotted, concocted, almost solely against this humble adversary who now stands before you.

"You reproached me, thirteen months ago, with waging war against a woman. But to-day, in truth, the odds against me are heavy. You have on your side one of the most powerful men in Germany, as well as an impregnable fortress.

"Madame, again I repeat, you were the one to declare war. From the moment that you elected we should be enemies you accepted the possibility of defeat. And I swear to you, you will be defeated, madame, defeated as a woman is by a man."

"You think so, sir?" said Christiane with a smile of ineffable disdain.

"I am certain of it, madame. There are some things which we know to be necessary and inevitable. When Baron von Hermelinfeld attempted to remove Julius from my influence, I did not lose patience nor did I fret about it. I knew he would come back. So I simply waited. Likewise in your case, madame, I shall wait. Even now you are back in my neighbourhood. Soon you will be in my power."

"Insolent fellow!" Gretchen muttered.

Samuel turned to her.

"As to you, Gretchen, you disliked me and I was attracted to you from the first. To-day, needless that you should be my chief care, my chief point of attack. I am able and I intend to make an example of you, and prove, through you, how effectually I can subdue those who provoke me."

"I subdued!" said the untamed girl.

"Child!" said Samuel, "I might say that you are that already. For the last year, who is the being most often in your thoughts? Is it Gottlob? Is it anyone in the village? No, it is I. You are mine, from fear, from hatred, what matters it? When you sleep, the name that haunts your dreams, is my name. When you wake, the thought that first rushes into your mind, is not, as formerly, the memory of your mother, or an unuttered prayer to the Virgin, but the thought of Samuel. When I appear, your whole being rises in revolt. When I am away, you expect me back at any moment. How often have you not anxiously watched for me when I was supposed to have left for Heidelberg? How often have you not crouched on the ground imagining you heard in the rock the neighing of my horse? Never did a lover await more longingly the return of his beloved. Call it love or hate; I call it possession, and ask nothing more."

Gretchen, terrified, pressed close to Christiane at Samuel's words.

"It is true, madame! every word that he says is true! And how does he know it? Good Heavens, madame, can I be indeed possessed by the devil?"

"Do not fret, Gretchen," Christiane said. "Monsieur Samuel makes use of equivocal expressions. We are not masters of those that hate us. We only possess what is freely given."

"Then according to that," Samuel rejoined, "Napoleon does not possess the twenty departments that he has conquered. But that is of little consequence! I am not the man to withdraw from the challenge even after hearing the terms in which you couch it. You assert, madame, that we can only possess what is freely given. Very well, so be it! You will give yourself."

"Villain!" cried Christiane and Gretchen in a breath. They had both risen, quivering with anger and fear.

"And as for you, Gretchen," continued Samuel, "that your punishment may be more prompt, and the example more striking, before a week has passed, you will place yourself in my power."

"You lie!" Gretchen cried.

"I thought I had told you that I never lie," replied Samuel, unmoved.

"Gretchen," said Christiane, "you are not to remain alone in your cottage, you must stay at the castle every night."

"Oh! of course the castle is inaccessible to me," said Samuel with a shrug of the shoulders. "But you still appear to be under the impression that I shall employ violence. Once for all, I do not need such means. But as Julius, and men of his languishing temperament, employ their gentleness, their good looks, such expedients, in fact, as they chance to possess, so I may perhaps be allowed to employ my learning and such powers as I have earned by hard work. Gretchen will remain free and mistress of herself; but of course I shall be at liberty to make use of those inclinations and instincts which are the auxiliaries nature gives me; I shall surely have the right to awaken love in her soul, to arouse desire in her dreams, in fact to set alight in the veins of this beautiful gipsy, the blood of the Bohemian and the wanton."

"Oh! villain, how dare you insult m mother!"

She still held in her hand one of the flower-laden branches with which she had been feeding the goat; in a fury of rage. she violently lashed Samuel's face with it.

Samuel turned pale, and for a moment his lips contracted with anger. But he controlled himself.

"Look, Gretchen," he quietly said, "you have again awakened Wilhelm."

As if in confirmation of his words, the child began to cry.

"And do you know what is the burden of his cry, in his innocence and weakness?" Christiane indignantly said. "He cries aloud that the man who insults two women is a coward."

This time no sign was allowed to escape Samuel of the quickly suppressed movement which Gretchen's words had evoked. He remained impassive, but his composure was similiar to that which he had maintained when Otto Dormagen insulted him.

"Good!" said he. "You hurl insults at me by that which you both hold dearest and most sacred; you Gretchen, by your flowers; you, madame, by your child. Fools that you are. This in itself will bring you ill-luck. I see so clearly into the future, and my revenge is so assured, that I cannot even be angry. I pity you. Farewell."

He waved his hand as a sign of adieu or of menace, and walked quickly away.

Christiane reflected a moment; then placing Wilhelm in Gretchen's arms, she said:

"Will you put him in his cradle?"

And, as if determined on a certain course of action, she ran to the castle, went direct to Julius' study, and knocked at the door.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CHRISTIANE ASKS A QUESTION

"WHO is there?" asked Julius. Christiane said, "It is I!" whereupon he replied: "Wait a moment."

It seemed to Christiane that Julius was conversing with someone in a low voice.

A second later he opened the door. Christiane drew back, nonplussed; already Samuel was in the room.

He bowed to Christiane with amazing coolness.

"I trust you are well, madame," he said, "after the anxiety you went through some nights ago. I need not ask after Wilhelm, for Julius has just been telling me that he is thriving well on the goat's milk."

Christiane could not at once recover her composure.

"You appear surprised at finding Samuel here?" said Julius. "I would beg of you to be indulgent to us both, and I pray you not to inform my father of the presence of my forbidden friend. In accordance with my promise, I did not invite Samuel, but I—how can I put it?—I met him. I felt it impossible, I must confess, to sacrifice an old friendship to idle prejudice. My father believes that Samuel will be the ruin of his son; but I know that, most probably, he has saved the life of mine."

Christiane had already resolved what to do, and plucked up her courage.

"I shall ever be grateful to Monsieur Samuel Gelb," she said, "for the medical services he has rendered us. But, without wishing to minimise the gratitude which we owe to him, I think, Julius, that we owe some as well to your father. Rightly or wrongly your father is uneasy; why disobey and displease him? If Monsieur Samuel be really your friend, he will not induce a son to go against his father's wishes. And, when all is said, your father is not the only one who mistrusts Monsieur Samuel. I am loyal and brave," she added, looking at Samuel," and I shall say openly what I think. This prejudice is shared by me. I believe that Monsieur Samuel Gelb's sole reason in coming here, is to disturb our happiness and our love."

"Christiane!" Julius exclaimed reproachfully, "Samuel is our guest!"

"Does he think so? does he say so?" questioned Christiane, looking at him with a proud, steady gaze.

Samuel smiled and turned it off with a compliment beneath which lurked a threat.

"Animation makes you more charming than ever, and I believe it is out of a spirit of pure coquetry that you always pretend to dislike me."

"Forgive her, Samuel," said Julius. "She is but a child. My dearest Christiane, it is not Samuel who foists himself upon us, but I who keep him here. It is to my interest not to be deprived of his pleasant, intellectual companionship."

"Throughout one whole year you did not miss him. Has it come to this, that your wife and child no longer suffice for you."

Julius, exchanging a look with Samuel, made Christiane sit down, placed himself on a footstool at her feet, and taking her hands between both his own:

"Now," said he, "let us have a serious talk together. Believe me, Christiane dear, I love you as dearly as ever. My greatest happiness is to love you, my crowning joy to be loved by you. You are the only woman I have ever loved, and—I say it before Samuel—the only woman I shall ever love. But, after all, be reasonable; in you, in the woman who loves me, there is also the mother, is there not? and you consecrate to your child a large portion of your heart and of your life. Well! similarly, the husband is not the whole man. God has given us not only a heart. He has endowed us with a mind. Side by side with our happiness, He has placed our duty; with the gratification of our desires, He has mingled the restlessness of our thoughts. Even in the interest of our love, Christiane, I want to be deserving of your esteem, I want to grow, I want to be something.

"I will not allow that life which belongs to you to become enervated through idleness. My ambition would have been to serve my country worthily, but up to the present I feel myself fitted for no calling but that of a soldier, and it certainly is not with the defeat of Germany that I should care to commence my career. At least at my country's call, let me be found ready. Now, Samuel, whose nature is so entirely opposite to mine (since you have spoken ill of him in his presence, it is but fair that I should speak well of him to his face), Samuel is necessary to me to keep alive the power of my will. Remember that here we live alone, out of the world, in seclusion, in the past, forgotten by many, dead to almost all. I regret neither Heidelberg, nor Frankfort, not in the least! but when a little life comes our way, why should we thrust it from us?

"I may from one day to another have need of my will, let us therefore endeavour to strengthen it. Am I unreasonable in what I say? You and my father have conjured up false ideas with regard to Samuel. If my friendship for him did you any wrong, any injury, I would give him up without a moment's hesitation. But what have you to say against him? My father disapproves of his ideas. I do not share Samuel's ideas, but still I am not sufficiently his superior intellectually, to take exception at them. As to you, Christiane, what has Samuel ever done to you?"

"And, if he has insulted me?" said Christiane, unable to contain herself.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TWO PROMISES

JULIUS started to his feet, deadly pale.

"Do you mean to imply that you have been insulted, Christiane, and not told me of it? Am I not here to protect you? Samuel, what does she mean?"

And the look he darted at Samuel glittered like the flash of a sword.

"We must allow madame to explain," Samuel quietly replied.

And his glance was cold as steel.

Christiane saw the two glances meet. To her it seemed that Samuel's was a sword and pierced Julius' breast.

She threw her arms round her husband's neck, as if to protect him.

"Speak," said Julius, curtly. "What has taken place?"

"Nothing," said she, bursting into tears.

"But what did you mean? To what did you refer?"

"I referred to nothing in particular, Julius; I spoke from instinct alone."

"He has done nothing to you?" Julius persisted.

"Nothing at all," she replied.

"He has said nothing to you."

Again she replied, "Nothing."

"Then what did you mean?" rejoined Julius, heartily glad to be able to remain Samuel's friend.

Samuel smiled.

Then there was a short silence, during which Christiane wiped away her tears; then she said:

"Let us say no more about it. But just now you were complaining of the very secluded life we lead, and you are quite right. A man of your worth, Julius, is made to live among men. It is good that women should have only their affections. But, indeed, I will prove that I know how to love you! I do not wish to monopolise you! I do not wish to keep you away from those to whom you could be of service! We must not bury ourselves for ever in this castle; we can come back here whenever you like, whenever you feel the want of rest. Let us go to Berlin, Julius, or to Frankfort, where you will be able to exercise your high faculties, where you will win admiration as you have won affection."

"My darling," Julius said, kissing her

tenderly, "what would my father say, who has given us this castle, if we did not seem to appreciate it?"

"Well!" she resumed, "without giving up the castle, we might go occasionally to Heidelberg. You have often told me what a gay, exciting life is, at times, that of a student. You regret it perhaps. We can easily have a little place in the town. You can renew your studies, see your companions of former days, enjoy your festivities, your large library."

"Impossible, my dear Christiane. Can I lead the life of a student with a wife and child?"

"You refuse me everything, Julius," said Christiane, with tears in her eyes.

Samuel, who had remained at a distance, now drew near.

"Julius is right, madame," said he. "The reigning Viscont von Eberbach cannot possibly return to student life; and Landeck cannot come to Heidelberg. But would you like Heidelberg to come to Landeck?"

"What do you mean?" Julius asked.

"I mean that madame is more powerful than Mahomet, and that the mountain can come every step of the way towards her."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Christiane.

Samuel resumed gravely, almost solemnly:

"I hold to giving you proof that I am entirely yours to command. Just now, you desire two things; firstly, that Julius should occasionally be able to join in the gay, yet earnest life of the University. Well! within three days, the University will be transplanted to the vicinity of this castle."

"Come! you are joking?" said Julius.

"Not at all!" Samuel answered, "you shall see. The other request you made Julius, madame, concerns me. The sight of me offends you, and you would be glad to keep me at a distance. Well! on this point too, your wish shall be gratified. Your own boudoir adjoins, if I mistake not, this study. May I ask you to accompany me thither for a moment?"

He opened the door. Christiane obediently passed into the next room. He followed.

"May I not come too?" asked Julius laughingly.

"Why! of course," Samuel replied.

Julius joined Samuel and Christiane.

Samuel led Christiane up to a panel in the wall.

"You see this panel, madame? You see this bust of an emperor holding a globe in his right hand? It may happen that some day or other you will want to see me . . . ."

Christiane shook her head incredulously.

"Egad! who knows?" Samuel rejoined. "Let us not say 'no!' to any eventuality. However, should it ever happen that I can be of service to you in any way, this is what you will have to do in order to summon me. Just come to this panel, press your finger to the globe that this emperor holds. The globe communicates with a spring; the spring causes a bell to ring; the ring warns me. Whether I am far or near, madame, I shall come in answer to your call, within twenty-four hours if I am absent, at once if I am near at hand. But until then, mark well my words, until you yourself summon me, I give you my word of honour that you shall not see me again."

For a moment Christiane remained stupefied, then turning to Julius she said:

"What do you think of that, Julius? Are you not surprised, to say the least, that Monsieur Samuel should know your house better than you do yourself, and be so much at home in it?"

Samuel answered:

"That is precisely the mystery that I was about to explain to Julius when you entered. Pardon my not speaking in your presence, but this has reference to a secret which does not belong to me, and which I can confide to no one but Julius. I hope that, except in this, I have given you every satisfaction."

"Yes, sir," said Christiane, "and although there is some contradiction between your words and your deeds, I leave you with the hope that I may trust in your word."

"You shall see whether I fail to keep it," said Samuel. "Within three days, the University of Heidelberg, like the Forest of Macbeth, will have come to you. And you will not see me again until you press the spring."

Samuel opened the door for her to pass out, bowing with perfect ease. This time she returned his bow with less repugnance, interested in spite of herself, in the promises of this strange man.

Samuel listened until her steps had died away, then he returned to Julius.

"Now," said he, "let us repair to your study, where every precaution has been taken to ensure our not being overheard; we have more important matters to discuss."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DOUBLE CASTLE

SAMUEL bolted the doors, then returned to Julius.

"Now then!" said he, "I hope that you are not going to express surprise like your wife at the simplest things. I implore you not to be astonished. This is the place for the 'nil admirari' which we learnt at college."

"Well and good!" Julius said, smiling. "Besides, with you, I am always prepared for surprises, and I expect nothing but the unexpected."

"My dear Julius," rejoined Samuel, "to begin with you must know that in your absence I have dabbled, as usual, a little in everything; a little in medicine, a little in architecture, a little in politics, a little in geology, a little in botany, etc. A little in medicine? You saw how I discovered that the illness of your child could be traced to his nurse. A little in architecture? you are going to have a specimen of my skill, and you will acknowledge that the architect is as clever as the doctor, unless you deem it more wonderful to preserve a child from death, than to resuscitate a dead period."

"What do you mean?" Julius asked.

"Let me first show you a repetition of the secret in the next room," said Samuel.

He went to a corner of the library. A lion carved in the wood-work gaped, with jaws wide open. Samuel placed his finger on the tongue of the lion, a panel slid back, revealing the wall. A button appeared. Samuel pressed it and the wall revolved, disclosing a passage large enough for a man to pass through.

"Now, follow me!" said Samuel to Julius, who stood amazed. "You know but the half of your castle, lucky owner! I am going to show you the other half."

"Are we to enter that way?" Julius asked.

"Of course. Pass in first, that I may restore the library to order, and close the door."

Julius passed in and the door being closed, they found themselves in total darkness.

"I cannot see a bit," Julius said, laughing. "What devilish witchcraft is this?"

"That's good! you are slightly astonished, but not in the least alarmed. Give me your hand. Right. I will lead you. This way. Be careful, we are at the top of the staircase. Hold the cord firmly. A hundred and thirty-two steps to go down; it is quite easy; the staircase winds."

They descended cautiously in the dark, inhaling the damp, cold moisture of depths to which air does not penetrate.

At the forty-fourth step, Samuel stopped:

"Here we come to the first iron door," said he.

The door opened and closed, they continued to descend.

"After the next forty-four steps, Samuel stopped again.

"Another door!" said he.

At length, after descending the last forty-four steps and passing through the third door, the light suddenly burst on Julius' sight.

"We have arrived," said Samuel.

They were in a circular room, lighted by a lamp which hung from the ceiling. This room was about ten feet in diameter. No woodwork, nothing but stone. Under the lamp stood a black table with chairs placed round it.

"Let us sit down and talk," said Samuel. "We have a quarter of an hour. They will not be here before two o'clock."

"Who is to be here at two o'clock?" questioned Julius.

"You will see. I told you not to be surprised. Let us have a chat."

Samuel sat down. Julius did likewise.

"You have now seen part of the subterranean region of your castle," said Samuel, "we will go over the remainder presently, when the company has arrived. But what you have seen suffices to make you suspect that it is not wholly your father's architect who has built this castle. I own to having collaborated with him to a certain extent.

"This poor devil of an architect (by

Royal appointment) was extremely puzzled over Gothic architecture. He used to come to the library at Heidelberg to hunt up old engravings. Picture to yourself a sloppy Greco-Roman fellow receiving a commission to build a robbers' hold for Goetz von Berlichingen? He suggested plans that would have made Erwin von Steinbach and Phidias shudder, one as much as the other. Fortunately I happened to be there. I convinced him that I had found the plans of the original castle of Eberbach. Imagine his delight! He let me do as I liked, all the more willingly that I had my reasons for keeping out of sight, and allowed all the credit to rest with him. So, I amused myself with restoring in minutest detail the castle of some dead and gone Count Palatine. Do you consider that I have succeeded fairly well in resuscitating this Lazarus of stone? Fairly well, have I not?"

"Splendidly," said Julius thoughtfully.

"The architect," Samuel continued, "has only seen that portion of it which glitters above in the sunshine. He was not always there, God be thanked! the poor man having to superintend the building of some nice, square, white ashlar houses at Frankfort. And as for me, whilst I had the workmen under my orders, I made use of them without mentioning the fact to him. Under pretence of foundations and cellars, I had them to construct on my own account some staircases and masonry. 'This was part of the original plan,' said I. And my letters-patent architect suspected nothing. Thus whilst I was occupied building one castle, I built two,—one over, one under, and you see I was not boasting when I told you that I had done a little in architecture."

"But what was your object?" said Julius.

"Ah! to dabble a little in politics."

"How so?" Julius asked with some embarrassment.

Samuel answered gravely:

"Julius, I cannot help noticing that you never speak to me about the Tugendbund! Have you then so entirely forgotten it? Are you no longer the Julius of former days, always responsive to the idea of freedom and fatherland, always chafing under the yoke of the foreigner, always ready to devote your life? It is, I know, customary for students, once their studies are over, to leave behind them at the University their youth, their aspirations, their generosity, their soul. We forget all that as we would an old pipe, thrown aside on a table at some festival of foxes. The man who scorned to bow to a Philistine becomes a Philistine himself, marries, multiplies, respects Royalty, bows to authority, and considers that he was very ridiculous and very childish to go and enquire into the welfare of mankind and the independence of his country. But I had thought we left these metamorphoses to the vulgar herd, and that there were still to be found choice spirits capable of persisting in a noble undertaking. Julius, are you still one of us or not?"

"For ever!" Julius cried with sparkling eyes. "But can I still hope to be admitted? Believe me, Samuel, if I have not mentioned the Tugendbund to you, it is not from indifference, but remorse. The very day of my marriage, there was a meeting of the Guild, and I did not attend. What, would you? My happiness made me neglect my duty. I have regretted this every day since. I feel that I was to blame, and am ashamed to think of it. If I have not spoken to you on the subject, it is not that I do not think of it; on the contrary, it is never out of my thoughts."

"And supposing I gave you an opportunity, not only of reinstating yourself in the eyes of the Guild; but of raising yourself; not only of winning forgiveness, but of earning thanks."

"Oh! how gladly would I seize such an opportunity!"

"Very well!" Samuel said. "Listen."

Just then a bell rang. Samuel did not move. The bell rang a second time, then a third. Samuel rose.

He opened a small door opposite to the one through which they had entered.

Julius caught sight of a staircase, evidently a continuation of the first, and completing undoubtedly the descent towards the Neckar.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE LION'S DEN

ALMOST at once there entered three masked men. The first carried a torch.

Samuel bowed with deep respect, and motioned them to be seated. But the three masked men did not advance, surprised probably at seeing Julius.

"Julius von Hermelinfeld, gentlemen," said Samuel, as if introducing him to them; "the master of this castle, which he places at your disposal, of which it was at least his due to do the honours. Julius, our chiefs and masters of the Supreme Council are here for the first time to inspect the safe retreat we have prepared for them."

The three made a gesture of assent and sat down. Samuel and Julius remained standing.

"I hope, my lord, the chiefs had no trouble to find the way?" said Samuel.

"Not the least," answered one of the three, "thanks to the plan which you had traced, and which we followed step by step."

"If this room suited your purpose it could be used for your private meetings."

"Very well indeed. But should we be perfectly safe against surprise?"

"You shall see. Julius, help me pull this rope."

He pointed to a thick rope in plaited and twisted iron wire, which hung from the roof against the wall.

By holding on to the handle, Samuel and Julius drew it down a foot. Then Samuel hooked the handle into an iron cramp made fast in the stonework.

"This," said he, "has opened twenty trap-doors in each of the two staircases leading here. As you see, the three iron doors—shutting them off, are superfluous. At present, an army could not reach you; it would be necessary to bombard the castle and rase it to the ground and you have four exits for escape."

"Good!" said the chief.

"And now do you wish to see the large hall for the general meetings?"

"We are here for the purpose of examining everything."

"Wait, then, while I close the trap-doors," said Samuel.

He detached the handle from the cramp, the iron rope went up a foot, and the dull thud of the trap doors could be indistinctly heard as they closed again.

Then, taking a torch, Samuel opened the small door through which the three chiefs had entered, and they all five descended the staircase.

After going down about twenty steps, Samuel touched a spring in the stone, revealing an opening, and the chiefs found themselves in a long straight passage, down which they followed Samuel.

They walked thus for a quarter of an hour.

At last, they came to a door.

"Here we are!" said Samuel.

He opened the door and led the three chiefs and Julius into an enormous excavation in the rock, capable of holding two hundred persons quite comfortably.

"Here," Samuel resumed, "we are no longer beneath the castle. The adepts will arrive up the side of the mountain, and will be in ignorance of there being any communication whatever between this hall and the Castle of Eberbach. I have arranged it thus in case of need, lest, should an Otto Dormagen betray the assembly, he could not compromise either the owners of the castle, nor disturb your private meetings. And now that you have seen all, does this place meet with your approval? Are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied and grateful, Samuel Gelb. We accept this safe retreat, so skilfully, so powerfully contrived. The chiefs will henceforth be your guests. This is the second service you render to the Guild. We thank you both."

"No," Julius said. "I cannot share the praise which Samuel alone deserves. I should have been happy to participate in his idea, and I thank him for having made use of my castle as I would have been only too glad to do. But I was away, and the entire credit is due to him."

"Keep your share, Julius von Hermelinfeld," replied the chief. "Samuel Gelb would not have made use of your property had he not been certain of your soul. The Union and Germany owes much to you both, and in order that you may both be rewarded, we confer upon you the same grade as we bestowed upon Samuel. Julius von Hermelinfeld you now hold second rank in the Guild."

"Oh! a thousand thanks," exclaimed Julius, elated with pride.

"And now we must leave you," said the chief.

"I will accompany you," said Samuel. "Julius, wait here for me."

He conducted the three to one of the principal exits, where they found their horses which they had tied to trees.

Then Samuel returned to Julius.

Julius thanked him effusively.

"Bah!" said Samuel, "as I told you before, I have dabbled a little in geology, that is all. Do not however imagine that these subterranean passages are responsible for the considerable inroads made in your father's purse. They have not cost him much, for they already existed. The ancient possessors of the castle probably had them hollowed out in case of siege. This huge rock is honeycombed with passages and cells like a bee-hive. With reference to that let me give you a little useful advice: Never take it into your head to venture into them alone. You would be swallowed up in them like a drop of water in a sponge. To anyone not knowing the place as I do, there are traps everywhere, and you would quickly disappear down some 'oubliette.'"

"I now understand," said Julius, "why you were able to promise Christiane that you would come in answer to her call. You have your own rooms somewhere about here?"

"Why, egad! I live here. Would you like to see my quarters?"

"I should indeed," said Julius.

Samuel, returning through the passage which terminated in the large hall, walked along for about five minutes, followed by Julius.

Then he stopped, opened a door on the right, ascended fifty steps or thereabouts, and came to a species of platform, divided into three parts.

One was a living room, another a stable, the third a laboratory.

In the room was a bed, and only such furniture as was indispensable.

In the stable, Samuel's horse was eating a truss of hay.

The laboratory was strewn with retorts, phials, books and plants. This evidently was the centre of Samuel's operations. A skeleton grinned horribly and grotesquely in one corner. Two glass masks stood on a stove.

To anyone entering this mysterious vault, immediately after admiring in some engraving the cell of Rembrandt's "Philosopher," the contrast between that peaceful, holy "retreat," so softly lighted by the beams of the rising sun, and this room of gloomy subterranean night, into which a sepulchral light penetrated drearily, the contrast would have been strange indeed. He would have thought that after gazing on the light of God's face, he saw the reflection of Satan's firebrands.

"This is my place of abode," said Samuel.

A feeling of uneasiness came over Julius in this laboratory of occult science.

"But," Samuel went on, "you have been long enough without breathing the outer air, and when not used to it, a mountain over one's head after a time produces a sense of oppression. I am going to take you back to the upper regions. Just wait a moment whilst I set my stove alight and put some plants to boil which I gathered this morning."

Having prepared his decoction he said to Julius: "Are you ready?" and conducted him in silence up a flight of steps which joined the one they had descended.

"You see," he resumed. "Notice well these two doors. When you wish to come and see me, slide back the panel in the library, and go down forty-four steps, which will bring you to two doors. The door on the right leads to the circular hall; that on the left to my rooms. Here is one key, I have another."

He accompanied Julius until they arrived at the door of the library.

"Good-bye," said Julius, breathing freely on regaining daylight and fresh air.

"Come whenever you like. You know the way."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE PHILTRE

SAMUEL went down into his laboratory.

The mixture he had put on the fire was boiling. He let it simmer slowly, and whilst waiting took a slice of bread and a little water and began to eat and drink.

His meal over, he took up a phial, poured the mixture into it, and put the phial in his pocket.

He looked at his watch.

It was a quarter to five.

"I have three hours to myself," said he.

He took up a book and was soon absorbed in its pages, laying down the volume at intervals to write long notes.

The hours passed by without his tearing himself away from his work or making any movement except to turn over the leaves and jot down a few lines.

At last he laid down the book.

"Now," said he, "I think it is time."

He again consulted his watch.

"Half-past seven. Good."

He rose, passed through the stable, and ascended a sloping passage, without a light, without feeling his way, and yet with as little hesitation as if he were walking in the country in broad daylight.

Then he stopped and listened.

Not hearing a sound, he pressed in a certain way on a portion of the rock which turned on its hinges, and he passed out.

He was at the back of Gretchen's hut, on the very spot where Gretchen and Christiane had been so surprised to see him appear that very morning.

It was growing dusk. Gretchen had not yet returned with her goats.

He tried the cottage door. It was locked. Taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked the door and entered.

In a cupboard was half a loaf, Gretchen's supper. Samuel took the bread, poured on it three drops from the phial which he had brought and put it back in its place.

"As a beginning, and to accustom her to its effect, this is sufficient," he muttered. "To-morrow I will return in time to double the dose."

Then he went out and locked the door.

But before burying himself again in his subterranean abode, he looked round, then stood still.

Gretchen's hut was now on his left, and on his right, dimly outlined against the evening sky, was the castle, on whose dark façade Christiane's windows alone shone out, brilliantly lighted up.

A menacing glitter shone in his eyes.

"Yes!" cried he, "I am master of you both and have you both in my power. I shall enter into your destinies as I do into your rooms, whenever I will—at my own time. I am master of the castle and master of the rock, so I must be master of those who appear to be the life of the rock and the soul of the castle, of dark Gretchen, fierce and wild as her verdant forest, of fair Christiane, fragile and precious as her sculptured palace.

"I will! Now I myself can no longer go back. My will has become my law and your doom. It is your fault. Why has your assumed purity, defied, fought against, and gone so far, up to the present, as to defeat my would-be crime? Why has your seeming weakness dared, insulted, and I think, God curse me! struck at what I called my strength? And this has lasted for over a year. In this terrible competition entered into by your pride against mine, can I be the loser? The only one I fear in the wide world is myself. Can I abdicate, in the face of these two children, this last sentiment—my own self-esteem?

"Besides, your defeat is necessary to the struggle which, like Jacob, I wage against the Spirit of God. I must prove to myself that man is master both of good and of evil, and is able, either working with or against Providence, to make the most pure to sin, and the most strong to fall.

"Who knows? perhaps the crux of the whole matter lies in the love which I exact from you. Lovelace, proud, eccentric! lulls to sleep her whom he wishes to conquer. I shall not send you to sleep, Gretchen, I will awaken you. The Marquis de Sade, strange voluptuary! pursues the ideal of infinite spirit in the torture of limited matter. It is not your body, Christiane, but your soul that I will possess through suffering. And we shall see whether my alchemy of human will cannot produce some result.

"Come now! am I really trying to find excuses and reasons to justify my actions? Tush! I act thus, by the Lord! because I am what I am, because such is my nature and my good pleasure, 'quia nominor leo . . . .' Ah! here comes Gretchen."

By the pale light of the stars, Gretchen was, in fact, returning home, driving her goats before her, but she walked with head bent down, and seemed dreamy and absent-minded.

"She is already thinking of me," Samuel said to himself, smiling.

Just then Christiane's window opened, and Samuel's keen glance distinguished Christiane herself, who stepped out on to her balcony and raised her beautiful azure eyes to the azure skies.

"And is this other one always thinking

of God?" muttered Samuel, biting his lips. "Oh! before these stars rise a second time, I shall have forced her to think of me, to think of the man who in twenty-four hours will have been able to compass the removal of a town, and the 'undoing' of a soul."

He re-entered hurriedly into the rock.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TRICHTER'S TROUBLES OF HEART AND PURSE

THE next morning at ten o'clock, Samuel went into the Raven Inn at Heidelberg, and enquired if Trichter were in.

On receiving an answer in the affirmative from the servant of whom he had asked the question, he went up to the room of his favourite fox.

Trichter evinced great delight and immense pride at being honoured by a visit from his "senior." In fact, in his joy, he let the enormous pipe which he was smoking, fall on to the floor.

Since we saw him a year ago, our friend Trichter had grown unmistakably more rubicund. His face showed signs of having aimed at preserving the honourable impress of the wine he had absorbed in his memorable duel. His cheeks and his forehead resembled a red mask. As to his nose, to give a satisfactory description of it, would need no less than the great William Shakespeare himself, the colour artist of Bardolph's fiery nose. Like Bardolph's nose, that of Trichter emitted rays of ruby-coloured light, and at night it should have procured to its noble possessor a wonderful economy of candles.

"My 'senior' honours me with a visit!" cried he. "Oh! will you allow me to fetch Fresswanst?"

"What for?" said Samuel.

"That he may share this privilege with me."

"Impossible. I have to speak to you on important business."

"All the more reason. Fresswanst is the friend of my heart and of my drinking bouts, my most intimate companion, and I do nothing without him."

"No! I tell you. We must be alone. Give me a pipe and let us have a talk while we smoke."

"Take your choice."

And he pointed to a formidable array of pipes hanging on the wall, and arranged according to size.

Samuel took the largest he could find, filled and lighted it.

While occupied with these preliminaries, he went on chatting to Trichter.

"Come, now, tell me: since when have you become so attached to Fresswanst?"

"Since our duel," Trichter replied. "I love him as my trophy. He is my conquest and I drag him about with me everywhere. Besides, he is really the best fellow living. He bears me no ill-will at all for having gained the day; Dormagen is the man he is aggrieved at. He has no respect for him, because he did not make him drink two drops of the 'liqueur' you offered him. He says that you saved my honour, and that Dormagen saved his life. He will never forgive him. For you he has tremendous admiration. He envies me, I can tell you, for being your fox. He has refused to be Dormagen's any longer. As he cannot be yours, he has drawn as near as he can to you by becoming my shadow. We are now foxes of the bottle. We spend our days in proving our affection for each other by mock challenges as to which will drink most. That keeps us in form in case of a duel."

"It appears to me that you were already in fairly good form," said Samuel, puffing out a whiff of smoke.

"Oh! that was nothing. We have made astonishing progress since then. Take my word for it."

"Your nose speaks eloquently enough. But these constant libations must make extensive inroads into your purses."

"Alas!" Trichter woefully said; "the truth of the matter is that emptying flagons soon makes a hole in one's pocket. During the first three months we ran ourselves into debt for the remainder of our lives. But we do not run into debt now."

"How is that?"

"Because no one will trust us. Besides, we are now able to drink without its costing us a 'pfennig.'"

"Ha! ha!" said Samuel incredulously.

"Does that appear to you unlikely?

Listen. In a word, this is our form of procedure: we bet. As we win every bet, then it is the lookers-on who pay the expenses. But even this noble expedient might fail after a time. Alas! we are too strong. No one dare oppose themselves to us now. They are afraid of us. Unlucky beggars that we are! We have reached the position of being admired by all. So I see looming before us the ill-omened day when there will no longer be bettors to pay for us, and then how shall we do about drinking?"

And Trichter added sadly: "I want to drink so badly,—oh, so badly!"

"You are very fond of wine, then?" said Samuel.

"It is not the wine, but the forgetfulness it brings."

"What is it you are so desirous to forget? Your debts?"

"No, my behaviour," rejoined Trichter with a horrible grimace. "Ah! I am a scoundrel! I have my mother in Strasburg; I should have worked to help her. Instead of which I have always been an expense to her, like a coward. After the death of my father, who should have supported her? I, of course. Well! I was base enough to say to myself that I had an uncle, one of her brothers, lieutenant in the army of Napoleon, and it is he who has supported his sister. Then my uncle was killed two years ago. So I had no further excuse and said to myself: 'Now, villain, this is the time!' But, unfortunately, my uncle left us a small legacy; so that, instead of sending money to my mother, I asked her for some. I postponed my good intentions. The legacy was not a large one, and it was soon swallowed up, the more so as I spent the greater part of it on drink, and soon not a penny was left. You see I am an utter scoundrel. I tell you all this that you may understand why I drink: it is to drown thought. I do not want you to think that I am a coarse drunkard, a vile sponge, a drinking machine. I am a miserable wretch."

"But," said Samuel, "how do you expect to extricate yourself from all this?"

"I have no idea. As best I can. I do not mind what I do. Ah! if I had to die that my mother might have bread, I would willingly do so."

"Are you in earnest?"

"In sober earnest."

"That is a good thing to know," Samuel added, "and I shall not forget it. But before coming to such a pass, why do you not appeal to Napoleon, since your mother's brother was killed in his service? He has that quality common to all great men, that he knows how to reward those who serve him. He would give your mother a pension, a post, something which would enable her to live."

Trichter held up his head proudly:

"I am German: can I ask anything of the tyrant of Germany?"

"You are German, it is true, but did you not tell me one day that your mother was French?"

"Yes, she is French."

"Then your scruples are exaggerated. We can discuss this later on. For the present, it is more urgent that your debts be paid."

"Oh! I have given up that Utopian idea."

"You must never give up anything. This is the subject I wanted to talk to you about. Which of your creditors duns you most?"

"Would you believe it? it is not a taverner," said Trichter. "The taverners treat me with respect and consideration, and give me encouragement as a rare and curious drinker, as an ideal difficult to attain, whom they hold up to the admiration of the public. My wagers result in enormous receipts for them, and naturally a number of little drinking encounters spring up around me in emulation of my example. I am the head of a school. Besides, I am an attraction in a tavern; I adorn the place; I am a luxury! A manager offered to engage me at thirty florins a week, on condition that he might put on his advertisement:

"'Trichter will drink!'

"Dignity compelled me to refuse, but at heart I felt flattered. Oh! no, the taverners are not those who torment me. My most ferocious creditor is Muhldorf."

"The tailor?"

"That's the man! Under the pretext that he has made my clothes for the last seven years, and has not yet received payment of the first account, that cur pursues me everywhere. For six years, each time he sent in his account, I ordered a new suit from him; but, this last year, he has utterly refused to supply me with any clothes at all. Not content with that, he literally persecutes me. The day before yesterday, as I passed his shop, he had the impertinence to rush out and tell me in the open street that the suit I was wearing was his, because I had not paid him for it, and, suiting the action to the word, he was about to lay a sacrilegious hand on my collar."

"He would have dared to ignore to such an extent the privileges of the University!" Samuel exclaimed.

"Set your mind at rest," said Trichter. "A haughty glance quieted down the bold man in time. I forgive him. I can imagine the rage of this full-blooded tradesman, exasperated by long waiting for a round sum, and who cannot bring his complaint before the courts, on account of the laws of the University, which forbid citizens to give us credit. Besides, as I tell you, his intention has not been carried into effect."

"The intention even is too much," Samuel exclaimed. "It behoves that Muhldorf be punished."

"It would be well, certainly, but . . . ."

"But what? . . . . I sentence him to give you a receipt in full, and grant you, besides, a substantial indemnity. Does that suit you?"

"Admirably. But you are joking?"

"You shall see. Give me writing materials."

Trichter scratched his head in perplexity.

"Well! something to write with?" Samuel repeated.

"The fact of the matter is," said Trichter, "I have neither pens, ink, nor paper."

"Ring; there must be some in the hotel."

"I do not know; it is an hotel for students. I have never asked for any."

In answer to Trichter's ring, a waiter appeared, and soon returned with what was required.

"Wait," Samuel said to the waiter.

He wrote:

"My dear Monsieur Muhldorf,

"A friend begs to inform you that your debtor Trichter has just received five hundred crowns from his mother."

"Are you writing to Muhldorf?" asked Trichter.

"I am."

"And what are you writing to him?"

"A preface, an introduction to the subject, the argument to a comedy or a tragedy."

"Ah!" said Trichter, satisfied but unable to understand.

Samuel sealed the letter, addressed it, and gave it to the waiter.

"Send round this letter by the first urchin you see, and give him this money for running the errand. He is to deliver the letter without saying where it comes from."

The waiter went out.

"Now, Trichter," Samuel went on, "you are to go at once to Muhldorf."

"What for?"

"To order yourself a new suit."

"He will ask me for money!"

"That's evident, of course! But you just tell him to go to the devil!"

"Hum! He is capable of getting angry if I beard him in his own den!"

"You must insult him, exasperate him."

"But . . . ."

"Now then," Samuel interrupted in a severe tone, "since when does my 'Pet Fox' permit himself to raise objections when his 'senior' has spoken? I guide you, it is not necessary for you to see; you have my eyes. Go to Muhldorf, be very insolent and very impertinent, and pray God that the tailor may put a finishing touch to his movement against you a few days since."

"Ought I to tolerate it?" asked Trichter humbly.

"Oh! on that point, you may please yourself," said Samuel. "I leave you to follow your own instinct."

"That's all right then!" cried Trichter, on his mettle at once.

"Take your stick."

"I should think so!"

Trichter took up his stick, and walked out.

"That is how all great wars begin!" Samuel said to himself, "and always because of a woman! Christiane will be satisfied."

CHAPTER XXXIX

WHAT COULD ONE DO AGAINST THREE?

FIVE minutes later, Trichter entered Muhldorf's, his hat on one side, arrogant, quarrelsome, aggressive, in anticipation of the reception which he expected to receive from the tailor.

Muhldorf received him with a gracious smile.

"Pray be seated, my dear Monsieur Trichter," said he, "I am delighted to see you."

"Bah!" said Trichter. "Have you any idea what I come for?"

"I can guess," the tailor answered, rubbing his hands together.

"I come to order a new suit."

"Capital! When do you want it?"

"At once," said Trichter, lost in astonishment at the tailor's pleasant manner. "Be quick and take my measure."

The tailor obeyed with alacrity. When he had finished he said:

"It will be ready for you on Saturday."

"Very well. Send it on to me," said Trichter, turning to go away.

"You are going?" said Muhldorf.

"What should I stay here for?"

"I do not ask you to stay, but I hope you are going to leave me something."

"What do you want?"

"A hundred florins at any rate, simply on account."

"My good fellow," rejoined Trichter, "you have been too polite to me to-day, and have taken my measure in too friendly a manner for me to answer you as an honest student should reply to a vulgar demand for money. The remembrance of the clothes you have made me for seven years, and the expectation of the suit you are to let me have on Saturday, induce me not to take exception to your call on my pocket. I forgive you."

"Forgive and give," said Muhldorf, putting out his hand.

Trichter grasped the tailor's hand.

"A handshake if you like," said he; "but I have not a penny."

And he turned towards the door.

Mulhdorf stood in his way.

"Not a penny!" he exclaimed, "and what about the five hundred florins your mother has sent you?"

"Five hundred florins? my mother?" Trichter repeated. "Ah! that's a good joke! Muhldorf, you are getting witty."

"That is to say," cried Muhldorf, attempting to suppress his rising anger, "that, not content with not paying for your previous suits, you have come to laugh at me in my own shop by ordering new ones."

"That is to say," retorted Trichter, already a little excited too, "that your reason for receiving me so obsequiously, and taking my measure with such cringing politeness, is just to poke fun at me."

"So," snapped Muhldorf, taking up Samuel's letter from his counter and putting it, in a fury of rage, under Trichter's very nose, "this letter is a hoax?"

"So," roared Trichter, throwing an angry glance at the letter, "when you were promising me a complete suit of clothes for Saturday, it was for the money with which you imagined my pockets were plentifully lined, not for the inestimable honour of making my clothes?"

And he brandished his heavy stick about. But Muhldorf snatched up his yard measure.

"It is not a question of the clothes I was going to make you," cried the exasperated creditor, "but of those I have made you and which you are going to pay for or give me back."

He advanced on Trichter, holding the yard measure aloft.

Muhldorf had barely raised his yard measure against Trichter ere Trichter's stick descended on Muhldorf.

Muhldorf uttered a cry, stepped back quickly, drove his elbows through two of his front windows, and turned again on Trichter, who was waving his stick wildly in the air.

At the cry of the tailor, two neighbours, a pork butcher and a shoemaker, rushed in.

The noble Trichter struck the shoemaker in the eye, in nowise alarmed at the number of his assailants. But suddenly he became sensible of an attack on his left calf which he had neither parried nor foreseen. It was the pork butcher's dog that had come to his master's assistance. Trichter instinctively looked down to see what had happened. The three adversaries took advantage of this movement to throw themselves upon him and kick him out of doors.

The impetus was such that the gallant Trichter went rolling into the gutter, pell-mell with the dog, which had the good sense not to loose his hold of the leg.

At the first onslaught all Trichter had been able to do as he shot past was to twist his stick about in such a manner as to throw it straight through the shop front, reducing all the remainder of the glass to atoms.

But, as he fell, he caught sight of two foxes passing at the end of the road.

"Help! help!" cried he at the top of his voice.

CHAPTER XL

THE TABOO

LET us relate with exciting brevity the rapid and important events which followed:

At Trichter's call the two foxes rushed up, rescued their comrade from the grip of the dog, and, grasping the situation at a glance, attacked the house of the tailor.

It was a stiff fight, the noise of which soon attracted other neighbours and other students to the spot. The fray was on the point of becoming general, when the police arrived.

Trichter and his friends found themselves hemmed in between the townsmen on one side and the police on the other. Although they made a gallant resistance, it was in vain—their position was a hopeless one. They had to yield. Some of the students managed to escape; but Trichter and the two other foxes were arrested.

They were led to prison, securely handcuffed. Fortunately the gaol was close by; for the students were beginning to appear in groups, and there were even some attempts made to rescue the prisoners. But the police, aided by the tradespeople, held out, and the three foxes were incarcerated safe and sound.

Reports of the skirmish and of the insult offered to the University were soon noised abroad. In ten minutes every student knew of it. In the twinkling of an eye the lecture halls were deserted and even the most popular professors addressed their words first to backs, finally to empty benches.

Groups collected in the streets. Three students arrested because of a dispute with a tradesman! the matter was a serious one and demanded vengeance. It was decided to deliberate on it in conclave, and all wended their way towards the hotel where Samuel lodged. The circumstance was of sufficient importance for the king to be informed of it.

Samuel had them all to enter into the immense hall which we have already seen made use of at the "Foxes' *Commerz*." He presided over the meeting and each one was able to express his opinion. It was a most memorable meeting, and as little parliamentary as possible. Needless to say that nearly all the suggestions proposed were violent, furious, inflammatory. The most extreme measures were those which received greatest applause.

One 'mossy head' suggested that Muhldorf's shop should be set on fire.

A 'finch' was hustled out with an explosion of hisses for having insinuated that it might be best to rest satisfied with the removal from office of those police officers who had arrested Trichter and his worthy defenders.

"Thunder and lightning!" roared a 'branded fox'; "the dismissal of their chiefs is the least we require, and even that would not be enough."

This was greeted with loud applause.

Then arose a perfect hubbub of the wildest and most extravagant proposals.

One suggested that all the tailors of the town should be punished for the crime of Muhldorf, that every beggar in the neighbourhood should be assembled and clothed gratis with all the cloth to be found in all the shops.

Another, whose speech it was said ought to be printed, maintained that that would be but scant satisfaction, that a tailor was not the only one mixed up in the affair, there was also a pork butcher and a shoemaker; that it was not only as tailor, pork butcher and shoemaker that they had thrashed the students, but as townsmen, in consequence of that natural and undying hatred between townsmen and students; and that therefore they must be revenged, not only on tailors, shoemakers and pork butchers, but on the citizens in a body, and that the University would not be truly revenged but by the sacking of the town.

The discussion, fanned into a flame by the heated imaginations of the fiery students, was now at its height. Samuel Gelb stood up.

There was a deep silence and the president addressed the meeting in these words:

"GENTLEMEN AND DEAR COMRADES,

"Many excellent things have been said, and the University will only have to make its choice between the different schemes of vengeance which have been proposed and expounded. But the honourable last speakers will permit me to say that there is perhaps something more pressing than to be revenged on our enemies ('Hear! hear'); we must first rescue our friends! (Applause.)

"Whilst we are deliberating here, three of our men are in prison; they expect us, they wonder at not seeing us come to their aid; they have the right to lose confidence in us! ('Bravo! that's true! that's true!')

"What! some of our students have been already imprisoned half-an-hour, and are not yet released! (Sensation.)

"Let us begin with them and end with the others. ('Good! hear! hear!') Let us fling open the door, and give them the pleasure of participating with us in the punishment of their insulters!" (Loud cheers.)

The meeting dispersed with enthusiasm. The word of command was given. The students hastily armed themselves with stakes, crowbars and beams.

A quarter of an hour later the prison was besieged.

All this had happened so quickly that the authorities had not had time to be warned. The prison was protected only by the ordinary guard. On seeing the students swarming round the corner of the street, the chief of the guard gave orders to lock the gates. But of what use were a dozen men against four hundred students?

"Forward!" cried Samuel. "We must not give time for the soldiers to come up."

And, placing himself at the head of a group which carried a formidable beam of timber, he marched first against the gates.

"Fire!" said the chief, and a volley was discharged against the assailants.

Not a student retreated an inch. A few pistol shots replied. Then, before the guard had had time to reload their muskets, twenty battering-rams struck the principal gates with tremendous force. The gates yielded.

"Courage, lads!" exclaimed Samuel; "one more blow, and we shall be inside. But wait."

He let go the beam, seized a crowbar and put it under the gates. Ten or twelve foxes did the same, and their united efforts slightly raised the gates.

"Now strike!" said Samuel.

The shock of twenty battering-rams was heard, and the gates burst open with a crash.

A second volley crashed into the students' ranks. Samuel was already in the courtyard. A soldier took aim at him. He rushed at the man with the leap of a panther, and stretched him dead with a blow from his crowbar.

"Lay down your arms!" he commanded the guard.

But the order was unnecessary. The students had crowded in after him, and already the courtyard was so thronged that it would have been impossible to take aim.

Besides the soldier killed by Samuel, three others lay bleeding on the ground, more or less seriously wounded by pistol-bullets. Seven or eight "studiosi" had received wounds, but fortunately none were dangerous.

The assailants disarmed the guard, and rushed to the cells where Trichter and his two comrades were confined and released them.

Then the conquerors smashed windows and doors.

After which they amused themselves, wise precaution, with destroying part of the prison.

Whilst they gave themselves up to this diverting form of exercise, a messenger came to warn them that the academical council had assembled and was about to pass judgment on the leaders of the revolt.

"Ah! the academical council is sitting in judgment on us," said Samuel. "Very well! we shall sit in judgment on the academical council. Ho! there!" cried he, "foxes and finches, guard the entrance-gates. The convention of 'seniores' is going to deliberate."

The "seniores" assembled in a hall attached to the prison.

Samuel immediately addressed the assembly. This time his harangue was short, to the point, Tacitus-like, and in harmony with the sound of the tumult, and the distant beat of drums; his remarks did not meet with a single interruption from those Conscript Fathers of twenty summers.

"Listen. We have no time to lose. I hear the beat to arms. The troops will soon be here. It is wise to decide on a course of action at once. This is my advice:

"All manner of schemes have been suggested. The setting on fire of Muhldorf's house, the sacking of the town, etc. Each one of these methods of revenge has its charm, I do not deny. But that would entail an engagement with the troops, the shedding of blood, and the loss of valued friends. Would it not be better to obtain the same result without bloodshed?

"What is it we want? To punish the tradespeople. Well! there is a more terrible method of punishing them than by smashing a few shop-fronts and setting fire to the frame-work. We can ruin Heidelberg in a quarter of an hour. All we have to do is to take ourselves off.

"Upon what does Heidelberg live, if not upon us? Who give her tailors the wherewithal to live? Those who wear their clothes. Who give the shoemakers work to do? Those who wear their boots. Who puts money in the butcher's pocket? Those who eat meat.

"Therefore, deprive the tradesmen of their customers, the professors of their pupils, and, instantly, professors and tradesmen no longer exist. Heidelberg without us is a body without a soul. It is dead.

"What; a tradesman has dared to refuse his merchandise to a student? Well! all the students will leave all the merchandise to all the merchants. And we shall see what they will do with it! One of these has refused to supply one of us. Very well! they will no longer supply any of us! I propose to make one of those striking examples which mark the history of the Students' Guild, and become the rule of the 'studentes' and a lesson to the Philistines for the future. I propose the emigration in a body of the University, and the interdict of the town of Heidelberg."

Samuel's words were drowned in a thunder of applause.

The departure was unanimously voted.

CHAPTER XLI

THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT AND THE STRENGTH OF THE LION

THE "seniores" went among the crowd and announced the decision arrived at, which excited enthusiastic cheers from everyone.

It was decided that the students would have the remainder of the day in which to complete their arrangements, that they would mention the proposed scheme to no one and that they would leave the town quietly and silently during the night, in order that the townsmen, on their waking, would be unexpectedly struck with stupor and remorse.

Just as all this was arranged, a young fox rushed in breathless.

A clerk of the court, who had been present at the assembly of the academical council, and who was related to him, had told him the result of the sitting.

This is what had been decided:

If the students resisted, the troops had orders to fire on them, and, at any cost, compel them to submit.

If they dispersed quietly, an amnesty to all, except Samuel, who had killed a soldier, and who was looked upon as the ringleader of all this uproar, and the instigator of Trichter, his favourite fox. Samuel was the only one blamed. An order of arrest had been issued against him, and the troops must even now be on their way to secure him.

A universal cry arose.

"War to the knife rather than give up the King!"

Trichter in particular was loud in his expressions of indignation:

"Ah! upon my honour! let them but try to lay a finger on my 'senior,' on him who has just rescued me, the King of the students, Samuel Gelb, a fine thing, indeed! Rascally council! we shall soon see!"

And he stood in front of Samuel, like a bull-dog before his master, grinding his teeth and growling to himself.

During the uproar, Samuel said a few words to a student, who ran off hurriedly.

"A fight! a fight!" cried the crowd.

"No! there must be no fighting!" said Samuel.

"The University has proved its valour. Our comrades are free; so our honour is safe. The 'Taboo' has gone forth. To put it into execution, you have no need of me."

"Do you want us to let them arrest you?" asked Trichter in consternation.

"Oh!" Samuel rejoined, smiling, "they have not got me yet, never fear! I shall know how to keep out of their clutches unaided.

"Now, is it quite understood? to-morrow morning Heidelberg will no longer be in Heidelberg, but where I am. As to the customary formalities of departure, Trichter knows them as well as he does his 'Code.' For myself, I am going on ahead to have quarters prepared for you at our 'Mons Aventinus.' You will find the flag of the University ready set up."

"Where?" asked several voices.

"At Landeck!" Samuel replied.

Murmurs rose from the crowd.

"At Landeck? Make for Landeck? Where is Landeck? Never mind! Landeck is nothing now, Landeck will be for us. Hurrah for Landeck!"

"Good!" rejoined Samuel. "But make way. Here comes my horse."

The student to whom he had whispered, rode up. He dismounted. Samuel sprang into the saddle.

"Give me the flag?" said he.

The student who carried the University flag handed it to him. Samuel wound it round the staff, strapped it to the saddle, armed himself with two pairs of pistols and a sword, and saying,

"At Landeck, to-morrow,"

He set spurs to his horse and galloped off.

At the first winding of the road he encountered a detachment of police, which he hustled aside. One of their numbers evidently recognised him, for he heard an exclamation, then several bullets whizzed round him. Samuel paid back such things; he turned round and, without stopping, discharged two of his pistols. But the police officers were on foot. In a few seconds, Samuel was out of reach, and, taking the least frequented byways, he soon found himself galloping along the main road.

Samuel had not hurried away too soon, for almost immediately after his departure the troops arrived.

In a moment the exits were guarded. Twelve constables advanced, supported by a platoon of soldiers, and one of them solemnly demanded that Samuel Gelb be delivered over to them, promising an amnesty to all on that condition.

The crowd offered no resistance, but simply said: "Find him."

The search began. It had lasted ten minutes, when an order arrived from the academical council. One of the police officers whom Samuel had jostled had brought the news of his having left the town. The council accepted this departure as sufficient satisfaction for the present, and demanded but one thing more: that the students should quietly disperse.

The order was read. The students dispersed and returned quietly to their rooms.

The council was delighted although surprised at this quick and peaceful ending. The remainder of the day only strengthened their delight and surprise. Not a challenge, not a quarrel, not a threat. To all appearances the students had entirely forgotten the uproar of the morning.

Night came. The townspeople retired proudly to rest. At ten o'clock, as usual, all the town was snugly asleep.

But, at midnight, had anyone been awake, they would have seen a strange sight.

CHAPTER XLII

SHAKING THE DUST FROM OFF THEIR FEET

AT midnight the doors of the students' quarters opened mysteriously; one student appeared, then a second, then a third; the majority were on foot, others on horseback, some in carriages, and all, walking in the shadow, bent their steps towards the University Square.

When they came across a street lamp they unhooked it noiselessly.

The crowd began to grow dense on the University Square and increased every moment. The shadows moving about there, greeted each other with a shake of the hand and a few words in an undertone. One of the most energetic was our friend Trichter, who had an enormous pipe in his mouth, and a graceful girl hanging on his arm.

Oh! frailty! thy name is woman! This girl was Lolotte, the former mistress of Franz Ritter. Triumphant Trichter had not only robbed Dormagen of his fox, but also Ritter of his sweetheart. One fine morning, taking advantage of a quarrel between the jealous swain and the flirt, he had supplanted Franz.

At about two o'clock, Trichter went up to a group;

"The torches," said he.

Suddenly twenty torches were lighted.

Trichter took one, waved it furiously about, called for silence and attention, and turning solemnly towards the centre of the town, pronounced the following imprecation in the true ancient lyric style:

"Cursed! cursed! thrice cursed town!

"Since your tailors have become blind to the honour of seeing their cloth converted into graceful habiliments for the student corps.

"Since your shoemakers are no longer content that their leather should pleasantly define our instep.

"Since your pork butchers cherish for their pigs a fate other than that of making that rich blood in our veins which aroused in us such noble ideas. Since, instead of paying us for these many advantages, they demand that we should pay them; very well! let them keep their shoes, their clothes, their meat! May their avarice ruin them. Their cloth will become the shroud of their fortune. To eke out their incomes they will be reduced to wearing our shoes themselves, and their wives will wear our boots. Their uneaten sausages will become tainted and give them the plague. Weep citizens, tradesmen, merchants of every kind! Henceforth, for you, no more money, no more festivities. No more will you have the pleasure of seeing us pass beneath your windows, joyous, dressed in bright attire, pleasant for the eye to rest upon and gaily singing '*Viva vallera!*'; no more will you be wakened at night by the stones which we amused ourselves with throwing at your windows. No more will your daughters be kissed by us. Weep, citizens, weep!

"Especially you, ungrateful taverners, the entire hope of your purse will follow on our heels. You may die of starvation through excess of victuals. And you may perish with thirst, but never again shall we drink your wine."

Here, Trichter quickly turned his torch upside down on the pavement, and said:

"I extinguish the life of Heidelberg with the light of this torch."

The nineteen other torch-bearers did the same, and repeated:

"I extinguish the life of Heidelberg with the light of this torch."

Darkness reigned once more.

The extinction of the torches was the signal for departure.

The crowd therefore set out and was soon on the road to Neckarsteinach.

The rising sun shone with an astonished ray on this strange band. It was a medley of men, dogs, foils, pipes, hatchets, women, horses and carriages. Pale, tired, dressed in slovenly fashion, the students carried away with them their most precious and most necessary possessions, flasks of brandy, a little linen, and no books.

Although the flight had taken place so secretly, it had been impossible to prevent the stable boys from the Inns, and a few early-rising tradesmen from witnessing it. So, at the tail of the procession, there was already a file of barrows and small carts laden with bread, meat, spirits, and all kinds of provisions. Trichter, who marched at the head, turned round, recognized a taverner, and suppressed a smile of content.

"Ah! a few 'Vivandiers!'" said he in as careless a tone as possible.

But, a moment later, under what pretext we know not, he quitted the side of the ambling nag on which he had perched Lolotte, allowed everyone to pass on, went straight up to the wine merchant, ordered himself a large glass of gin, then rejoined his sweetheart.

At Neckarsteinach they halted for a short rest. The walk had sharpened the appetite of the students, and the provisions from Heidelberg which, seeing the urgency of the case, it was agreed to consume yet this once, were swallowed up in a trice. The innkeepers of Neckarsteinach gave up their last chicken and their last bottle of wine.

Thus restored, the students set out again. They walked on nearly four hours longer, then arrived at some cross-roads.

"Now then!" said Trichter, "the road branches off. Must we go to the right or to the left? I hesitate as did Buridan's ass between his two pecks of oats."

Just then, the galloping of a horse was heard in the distance. A cloud of dust was seen flying along the road to the left and approaching rapidly. A second later, the horseman was recognised; it was Samuel.

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd.

"Which road must we take?" asked Trichter.

"Follow me!" said Samuel.

CHAPTER XLIII

MYSTERIES OF A NIGHT AND OF A SOUL

WHAT had Samuel been doing since the previous day, since his departure from Heidelberg?

The preceding evening, his horse had brought him back to Landeck at about seven o'clock, less than twenty-four hours after he had left it.

Once more he had gained admittance into Gretchen's hut.

He had left it barely five minutes, when Gretchen returned with her goats. She was bringing them home earlier than usual, not even waiting until night had quite closed in. Since the morning she had felt a strange sense of uneasiness, which had deprived her of sleep and appetite. The whole day long, she had been feverish. She felt at once excited and depressed.

After milking her goats and penning them in for the night, she went into her hut; but she soon came out again; nowhere could she rest.

This July night threatened to be overpoweringly hot. There was not a breath of air. The chirp of the cricket arose from every nook and corner of these sun-scorched fields. By some singular contradiction, Gretchen was as thirsty as this parched land, and yet felt no inclination to drink; she was as sleepy as this heavy atmosphere, and yet had no inclination to sleep.

A sort of mysterious, latent voluptuousness hung over all things. The cooings and flutterings of the birds died away amorously in the nests. A pungent odour rose from the grasses. The stars shone softly through the warm transparent darkness.

Gretchen wanted to go in, and yet she remained seated on the grass, her hands clasping her knees, gazing without seeing, her eyes on the stars, her thoughts nowhere. She suffered in all her being, without knowing why. She longed to cry; it seemed to her that tears would relieve her, and she tried to force them to come, like the parched land entreating for a drop of dew. After a tremendous effort she felt the tears spring to her burning eyes.

What astonished her most of all was that she could not rid her mind of one thought, which, for the last twenty-four hours, had been uppermost, in despite of herself, the thought of Gottlob, that young labourer who, the previous year, had asked her to marry him. Why did she think of this young man? Why did she think of him with mingled pain and pleasure, she, who had always been indifferent to him?

Not a month ago, Gottlob, meeting her one day, had diffidently asked whether she had not changed her mind, if she still loved a solitary life. She had said in answer that her freedom was dearer to her than ever.

Gottlob had told her that his parents wished to force him into a marriage with Rose, a girl living in the neighbourhood. Gretchen had not felt the least jealous. She had warmly advised Gottlob to please his parents, and, far from any feeling of heart-ache or wounded vanity, she had been truly glad to know that this honest fellow would be able to console himself with another and live happily with her.

Since this meeting, her thoughts had often reverted to this marriage of Gottlob's and always with the same feeling of pleasure.

Why then did she think of it to-day with mingled bitterness and regret? Why could she not picture this young man in the arms of another, without a sensation of unutterable pain? Why did the remembrance of Gottlob, vainly repulsed, return unceasingly to torment her, like those teasing flies which she brushed away with her hand?

Why on that very day, instead of taking her goats, as she usually did, among the rocks or in the depths of the forest, had she, on the contrary, sought the outskirts of the wood and the borders of the plain? Gottlob had some pieces of ground that way. Why had she stayed in that neighbourhood the whole day, and why, Gottlob not having appeared, had she felt weighed down with some vague sense of sadness?

She had decided to return, not even waiting till the close of day. Suddenly she had started; she heard Gottlob's voice behind her. She had turned round, and at the bend of the road, saw the young man coming home from the fields. But he was not alone. Rose's father and Rose herself were with him.

He had given his arm to his sweetheart

and was talking gaily to her. Gretchen had hidden herself behind the trees, and had not been seen. Why had her heart throbbed painfully ? Why had a pang of jealousy shot through her on looking at Rose ? Why had she conjured up, for the first time in her life, the passionate mysteries of a nuptial night ? Why did the delight of Gottlob and the proud smile on Rose's face haunt her even to the threshold of her cottage ? Why was she sad because her wish had come to pass ? Why did the happiness of others bring these hot, burning tears into her eyes—she, who had never harboured an unkind thought of anyone ?

To all these questions she could find no answer.

She wanted to distract her thoughts. She stood up. Her eyes and lips were hot and feverish.

"It must be because I am thirsty and in want of sleep," she said to herself.

She went into her hut, struck a light and lighted her lamp.

Then she opened her cupboard and took from it some bread.

She ate only a mouthful. She was not hungry. Besides, it seemed to her that the bread still had that strange taste which she had already noticed the previous evening.

She had put some sour milk aside in one corner of the shelf. She began to drink thirstily.

Suddenly she put down the bowl. There was a curiously bitter flavour in the milk. But she was so parched that this did not deter her.

"Bah !" said she, "I am mad !"

And she drank to the last drop. She felt somewhat refreshed, and lay down fully dressed on her bed of bracken.

But she could not sleep. After a while, she felt more restless than ever. The milk she had drunk, instead of allaying her thirst, seemed to have further stimulated it. She felt choking in this close room, there was fire in her veins, fire in her brain.

She could not endure it, and got up to go outside.

On reaching the door, her foot slipped on something. Looking down, she saw some shining object. She stooped and picked up a tiny phial in some metal which was neither gold nor silver, and which was unknown to her.

Who had left that little phial there ? Gretchen had locked the door on leaving. She felt sure of it.

The phial was empty ; but the odour of what it had contained still remained. Gretchen recognized the same odour as she fancied she had noticed in her bread and in the milk.

She put her hand to her head.

"Surely I must be mad," she said to herself in bewilderment. "Herr Schreiber was right after all. Solitude is not good. Oh ! God !"

She compelled herself to think and to remember. She looked round the rooms, and fancied that her few belongings were arranged differently to when she left. Could anyone have been in the room ?

She went outside. Night had fallen more than two hours since, and the air should have been growing cooler.

And yet it seemed to her hotter than before. She felt as if she were inhaling fire.

She stretched herself on the grass, but the grass seemed to her burning hot.

She lay down on the rock ; but the stone was as hot as the ground ; the granite, like a stove that remains hot after the wood is consumed, had retained the heat from the sun.

"Whatever had she drunk ? what was that philtre ? who had brought that phial ?" Suddenly she shuddered from head to foot ; the thought of Samuel, dispelled until then by the thought of Gottlob, had just flashed across her mind. Samuel ! oh yes ! it must be he. Instantly all her superstitious fears returned. Samuel was certainly the devil. Yes, that was it, he had threatened her, he was keeping his word, he had laid hold of her, he had taken possession of her, he was coming to claim her. The devil had no trouble to get into houses without a key ; no locks could withstand him. Gretchen felt she was lost.

And, infernal mystery ! although terrified and in despair, she was at the same time almost glad. She felt a bitter joy at the thought that the devil had her in his power. She was certain that Samuel was coming, and expected him with mingled impatience and horror. One part of her said, "I cannot escape !" and the other part : "So much the better !" Some terrible frenzy took hold of her imagination. The vertigo of hell began to seize her. She longed to hurl herself into damnation.

Presently the thought of Gottlob returned to her. But now she saw him with different eyes. Instead of thinking longingly of him, he became repulsive to her. What was he to her, this peasant with coarse red hands and rough manners, more stolid than his oxen. She, jealous of Rose! Ah! likely indeed! The husband, the lover she wanted, was not a rustic with hands only fit for the plough, but a young man with a broad forehead, shapely hands, keen piercing eyes; a clever man with an intimate knowledge of plants, conversant with the remedies needed for wounded roes,—and wounded souls, knowing how to cure and how to kill. The sound of a footstep on the gravel made her start to her feet.

She opened her eyes to their fullest extent.

It was Samuel.

CHAPTER XLIV

SIN IS NEVER TO BE TRIFLED WITH

On seeing Samuel, Gretchen drew herself up, and stepped back; but by some instinct stronger than her will, in retreating she held out her hands to Samuel.

Samuel stood still, his pallor further heightened by the rays of the moon. In the expression of his face there was neither mockery, triumph, nor hatred; his look was grave, almost melancholy. Gretchen thought he looked taller than usual.

She still retreated towards the door, struggling between two impulses, frightened, yet fascinated, her feet turned towards her cottage, her face held out to Samuel.

"Do not come near me!" she cried. "Begone, devil! I am afraid of you! I hate and I loathe you, do you hear? In the name of the Holy Virgin, begone, reprobate!"

And she made the sign of the cross.

"Do not come near me!" she repeated.

"I do not mean to," Samuel slowly replied. "Not one step will I go towards you. It is you who will come to me."

"Ah!" she said, despairingly, "that's very possible. For I do not know what you have made me drink. You have brought it from that hell of yours. It is poison, is it not?"

"It is not poison. It is the essence of certain flowers which you are very fond of, and with which you have dared to insult me. It is an elixir in which the concentrated forces of nature waken the slumbering forces of life. Love was asleep in you, I have wakened it, that is all."

"Ah! the flowers have betrayed me!" Gretchen exclaimed, in heart-broken tones.

Then, looking at Samuel with sadness, rather than anger:

"I see that you speak the truth," she went on, "for my mother used to tell me that love means suffering and I do suffer."

And she still tried to flee from him.

Samuel did not stir. He stood motionless, and, but for the fire in his burning, passionate eyes, he might have been mistaken for a statue.

"If you are suffering," said he, "why do you not ask me to cure you?"

He said these words in a sweet, persuasive voice which stirred Gretchen to the inmost fibres of her being. She made one step towards him, then another and yet another. But suddenly she started away, terrified.

"No, no, no! I will not! You are a terrible and a cursed man. You want my ruin. But you have no hold over me."

"I repeat," said Samuel, "that I shall not take one step towards you. You see very well that I do not move. If I wished, could I not with three strides compel you to my will? But I prefer to wait your pleasure."

"I am thirsty," said Gretchen.

Then in a humble, caressing voice, she asked:

"Is it true that you can cure me?"

"Perhaps," said Samuel.

She drew a knife from her pocket, opened it, and approached Samuel, armed and reassured.

"Do not touch me," said she, "or I shall strike you. But make me well again."

Suddenly, however, the poor child flung the knife from her.

"Am I mad?" said she. "I want him to cure me and I threaten him! No, my Samuel, I no longer threaten you. See, I have thrown away my knife. I entreat you. My head aches so terribly. I ask your forgiveness. Make me well,—save me."

She fell at Samuel's feet and clasped her arms about his knees.

It was a marvellous picture to see, under the wan light of the moon and amid such wild surroundings, the girl, dishevelled and in tears, twining her arms round the knees of this statue. Samuel, with arms folded, watched with a sinister look the fire, which he had set alight in this young virgin blood, flame up and consume her. Passion beyond description animated Gretchen; sparks flashed from her eyes and lighted up her dark skin. She looked beautiful thus. Samuel, against his will, felt the fire in this child's veins communicate itself to him. The fever which consumed her and radiated from her began to affect him.

"Ah! so you are still angry with me," said the beautiful girl. "Why do you hate me?"

"I do not hate you," Samuel replied. "I love you. It is you who hate me."

"Oh! not now," she softly said, raising her sweet face to his.

Then, changing her mind in a moment:

"Yes! I always hate you!" she went on, harshly. And she attempted to fly from him. But, after taking three steps, she fell rigid and as if dead.

Samuel did not stir a muscle.

He simply called, "Gretchen!"

She rose to her knees, and without speaking, held out imploring arms to him.

"Well! come!" said he.

And she dragged herself to him, grovelling on her knees.

"I have no strength left," she said; "help me up."

"You yourself ask me to do so."

He stooped, and raising her by both arms, helped her to rise.

"Oh! you are strong!" said she, as if proud of him. "Let me look at you."

She placed her hand on Samuel's shoulder and drew a little away from him as if to gaze at him more easily.

"You are beautiful," she said, "you look like the King of night."

All this was said and done with bewitching grace, and with indescribable suppleness in her every movement with irresistible magnetism in her voice. Up to the present there had been more terror than temptation in the struggle of this poor innocent soul. But Samuel felt his sang-froid forsaking him, and his composure melting away at the furnace of this flaming heart.

Suddenly Gretchen threw her two arms round his neck, and, standing on tip-toe, brushed her cheek across his forehead. Seized by the passion he had aroused in her, he pressed his lips to hers.

The moment she felt him touch her, Gretchen shuddered. Instantly her languor turned into rage, she bit Samuel violently on the cheek, disengaged herself from his arms and started back with a harsh indignant cry.

But just as quickly appeased, a shiver ran through her, and she looked at Samuel trembling, repentant, asking forgiveness.

"Oh! I have hurt you, have I not?" she said.

"No!" he replied, and at last the marble statue seemed stirred into being and thoroughly active; "no! on the contrary, I thank you. That very pain is what is sweet. That it is which mingles the horrible and the beautiful, danger and joy, love and hate, heaven and hell; that is the infinite. That is what I love in you."

"Ah well! so much the worse, I love you too," exclaimed Gretchen.

But changing suddenly:

"Ah! how hateful I am! shall I be false to my vow? No, rather let me die."

With a movement quicker than lightning she snatched up her knife which lay glistening in the grass, and plunged it in her bosom.

But Samuel had seized her arm. The blade did not penetrate far, but the blood spurted out.

"Unhappy child!" said he, taking possession of the knife. "Luckily I caught hold of your arm in time. It will be nothing."

Gretchen seemed unconscious of the wound. She looked vaguely in front of her, as if thinking of something else. Then she passed her hand across her brow.

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

"No; on the contrary, that has done me good. I am coming back to my senses. Now I understand. I see what I must tell you."

She burst into tears and clasped her hands tightly together.

"Listen to me, sir," said she. "You must spare me. You must take pity on me, for mercy's sake. I crawl at your feet. I am conquered, you are the stronger, I am yours if you so wish it; well! spare me! It is more mighty to spare than it is to yield. Oh! with all my heart and soul, I do entreat you! What good would it do you to carry out your evil intentions towards me? For a moment's gratified vanity, you would ruin a whole existence? What would become of me afterwards? Reflect. Do not be afraid that once out of danger, I will defy you again. Ah! there is no fear, this is a lesson that I shall never forget. I shall even tell Madame Christiane about it. Whatever you command, I will do. Surely what I say is reasonable, and you see for yourself that there is no need to torture me further, and you will be merciful to me. What more could I do, since I am at your feet? You are a man, and I, I am not even a woman, I am only a child. Does one give any heed to what a child may say or think? Does one ruin her for a word she may have said? Oh! sir, have mercy!"

Her tone was so pitiful, her abandonment so complete, that even Samuel was touched. For the first time perhaps his resolution faltered. An uncontrollable wave of emotion swept over him, before the deep despair of this snow-white purity upon which he in his pride was about to inflict a perhaps mortal stain. Besides, was she not sufficiently tamed, sufficiently conquered, sufficiently possessed? Was she not entirely in his power? Did not she herself admit that she was absolutely dependent upon him? Then, he could afford to be generous. The moment that she was willing to give herself, why take her?

Unfortunately, Gretchen was very lovely, and the potion still continued to do its work. Little by little her despair relaxed into vague feverish languor, she had taken Samuel's hands in hers and was covering them with kisses, which breathed already of something besides entreaty, she looked at him with eyes full of melting tenderness.

"Oh!" she said, in a strange tone, "make haste to cure me, soon it will be too late."

"Yes," he answered, gazing at her with burning passionate eyes, "yes, I shall soon cure you; I am going to fetch another philtre, which will calm and quiet your blood. I am going."

But instead of going, his gaze remained riveted on her beauty, as, lost in some vague ecstasy, she clung voluptuously to him.

"Yes, go," she said.

But instead of thrusting him from her, she retained his hand. She did not relax her hold of him. Her voice said "go!" her eyes said "stay!"

Samuel made a violent effort.

"Am I no longer master of my will? You are wholly subdued, tell Christiane so. That is enough; useless to commit unnecessary crime. Farewell, Gretchen."

He tore himself away from Gretchen's clinging hands and rushed towards the rock.

"You are going!" Gretchen cried sadly and tenderly.

"Yes, farewell!"

But scarcely had Samuel reached the entrance and the shadow of the rock, ere two nervous arms were thrown round his neck, burning lips were pressed to his, and, horror stricken, he in turn felt himself seized, overpowered, mastered by his sin.

CHAPTER XLV

CHRISTIANE IS AFRAID

THE next day at about four o'clock in the afternoon, Julius and Christiane left the castle to take a walk.

"Where shall we go?" Julius asked.

"Wherever you like," said Christiane.

"Oh! it is quite immaterial to me," rejoined Julius, with lazy indifference.

"Well! let us go and see Gretchen. She did not come this morning. I had to send to fetch the goat, so I am rather anxious about her."

They climbed the ascent leading to Gretchen's cottage. Christiane turned back to look at the valley.

"What a glorious view," said she to Julius, pointing to the river and to the hills on the horizon.

"Yes," said Julius, without turning to look. Christiane feigned not to notice her husband's listlessness. She walked on towards Gretchen's hut.

The door was locked.

"Probably she is up the mountain with her goats," Julius remarked.

Christiane walked on a few steps to the hollow in the rock where Gretchen's goats were usually penned. The goats were there.

"That's strange," she thought.

And coming back to the door, she called:

"Gretchen! are you there? Gretchen!"

There was no answer.

Just at this moment, a great noise arose far off in the valley. Julius and Christiane looked in the direction from whence this sound proceeded. The road from Neckarsteinach seemed a black moving mass. A cloud of dust prevented one from distinguishing what it was. Shouts and a medley of songs broken by the wind, that was all could be heard. All that could be seen, was that there must be a throng of five or six hundred people.

This confused mass was approaching rapidly. Suddenly Julius clapped his hands.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "Samuel is keeping his word."

"What do you mean?" asked Christiane.

"I mean," Julius repeated, "that there is Heidelberg coming to Landeck. Samuel had promised to do this for you, and whatever he promises he performs. But to have done that in so short a time! Yes, they are indeed my comrades. Now that they are nearer I can distinguish the students from the University. Do you hear their *Viva vallera?* Oh! what a glorious surprise!"

And Julius who, a few moments since, had been apathetic, was now eager and alert. Christiane grew thoughtful.

The road wound round the base of the rock on which Christiane and Julius stood, about a thousand paces away. The troop advanced lightly and quickly. Soon Julius was able to recognise Samuel at the head of the procession. He was on horseback, grave as the general of an army.

Behind him was borne the great banner of the University.

The students approached nearer, soon they were opposite to Julius and Christiane.

As he passed, Samuel looked up, saw them and bowed.

The students recognised Julius. Every cap was flung up in the air, and every voice thundered out the most heart-stirring refrain which had ever burst on human ears.

"My sweet little Christiane," said Julius, "my comrades have seen me, and I think it would be advisable for me to go and do the honours of our part of the country. You are quite near to the castle, and will not mind going home without me; for, I am somewhat impatient, I must admit, to renew acquaintance with my friends and to know what this means. I shall be back soon."

"Go by all means," said Christiane, a sense of sadness coming over her, she could not tell why.

Julius did not wait to be told twice. He kissed Christiane on the forehead, pretended to walk quietly until he reached the turning in the road, then when he was round the corner and Christiane could no longer see him, he took to his heels, and, in a few moments had joined the crowd.

Christiane watched him out of sight.

"As soon as Samuel appears," said she to herself, "he hastens to him."

She wiped the tears from her eyes, and was turning to go away, when she heard a footstep on the gravel behind her.

Looking round, she saw Gretchen.

"Gretchen!" she said, "but whatever is the matter with you?"

The little goatherd had changed terribly since the previous evening. Pale, dejected, with dishevelled hair, and black circles round her eyes, she seemed to have aged ten years. The excitement natural to her had given place to a sinister wildness; there was something mournful and fatal about her whole appearance.

"What is the matter?" Christiane repeated, "and where do you come from?"

"From my hut."

"We called you, why did you not come?"

"Because my lord the Viscont was there, and I do not wish anyone to see me now. No, I shall hide myself from everyone, and speak to no one but you. I am ashamed. You I love, and I positively had to tell you. Be on your guard. Believe me, Samuel Gelb does not lie. What he says, he does. Where he has threatened, he strikes. You cannot help it, nor perhaps, can he. See, it hurts me more than I can say to tell you this, but I do so to save you. Turn your eyes away, do not look at me, I implore you, and I will tell you all. Do not look at me; there, that's right. Now listen: Samuel Gelb had said that I should be his. Well! he made me drink a potion made of his hell and of my flowers. . . . . In a word, I am his. Look to yourself! Farewell."

And immediately taking flight, she rushed into her hut and locked the door.

Christiane was horror-stricken and stood as if turned to stone.

"Gretchen! Gretchen!" she cried.

But she called in vain, Gretchen did not come.

"Oh!" thought Christiane, trembling all over, "it is quite true; he does whatever he says he will do. Heidelberg is at Landeck. Gretchen is ruined, and she leaves me, and my husband leaves me too. Alone! oh! I feel afraid. I will write to the baron, and ask him to come to my assistance."

CHAPTER XLVI

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

THE students were singing at the top of their voices:

"Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus;
Ubi sunt qui ante nos
In mundo fuêre?"

Suddenly they came to a turning in the road, and a village appeared. All the inhabitants, men, women, children, attracted by the noise, were at their cottage doors, staring with all their might at the invasion of this strange army.

Samuel was no longer there. He had gone in the rear to have a talk with Julius.

The student who headed the procession addressed himself to the first peasant:

"Hallo! rustic, what village is this?"

"Landeck."

Immediately a shout burst from every lip:

"Hallo! Hurrah! Houp-la! Foxes and finches, halt! this is Landeck!"

Then a thousand different cries arose.

"Hail, Landeck!"

"Mons Aventinus of our academic Rome, we greet thee!"

"Hideous conglomeration of hovels, hail!"

"Hail! village from this time forth historical, sublime hamlet, immortal hole."

Trichter turned to Fresswanst:

"I am thirsty," said he.

A finch went up to a plough-boy.

"Hi! peasant, native of these parts, semblance of a man who gazes at me with the eyes of a fish, have you sufficient intelligence to direct me to the Raven Inn?"

"There is no Raven Inn at Landeck," replied the peasant amazed.

"Well, the Golden Lion Inn."

"There is no Golden Lion tavern in Landeck."

"The best tavern in the neighbourhood, then, you idiot?"

"There is no tavern at all in Landeck."

This reply was greeted with a shout of indignation from the students.

"Do you hear what this farmer-fellow says?" exclaimed the finch; "there is not one tavern in Landeck."

"Where shall I put my hat-boxes?" asked one student dolefully.

"Where can I put my dog?" groaned a fox.

"Where shall I put my pipe?" roared furiously a moss-covered head.

"And I," exclaimed another, "where shall I put the apple of my eye, the rose of my springtime, the beloved of my heart?"

Fresswanst said to Trichter:

"I am thirsty."

All the students began to sing, in a doleful tone which formed a contrast to the more than merry meaning of the words, the second verse of the famous Latin song:

"Vivant omnes Virgines
Faciles, formosæ;
Vivat membrum quodlibet
Vivant membra quælibet!"

Some began to show signs of ill-humour. The glamour of the exodus was fading away. Discontented groups provoked each other and seemed inclined to quarrel.

"Look here, Meyer," said one big burly fox to his neighbour, "you have given me a thump in the back with your elbow, brute that you are!"

"You fool!" said Meyer.

"Fool, did you say? Very well! Meet

me in a quarter of an hour, at the Kaiserstuhl hill! Ah! bless my soul! but where will be our Kaiserstuhl hill?"

"It's appalling! no place even where we can have a fight."

A peasant cried out:

"I say, sir student, take care! your dog. . . ."

The student looked sternly at him.

"Your worshipful dog, rustic, if you please!"

"Well! sir, your worshipful dog has just bitten me."

"What! you have made my dog bite you, you rascal! There, there, take that!"

He gave the rustic a thrashing.

"Bravo!" shouted the students.

And the chorus broke out again as if in philosophical encouragement:

"Vita nostra brevis est;
Brevi finietur.
Venit mors velociter;
Rapit nos atrociter."

Trichter and Fresswanst said in the same breath:

"I am fearfully thirsty!"

"Now, then," asked one student, "are we going to take root in the heart of this stupid little village and remain stuck here like posts to point out the way to travellers?"

"Samuel was to tell us what to do."

"Samuel! Samuel! where is Samuel?"

"Hallo! Samuel, come along, do; we do not know which way to turn; anarchy has passed all bounds, revolt is rife, confusion is worse confounded."

"Coriolanus, is one supposed neither to eat, drink, nor sleep, among the Volscians?"

Samuel came up quietly with Julius.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Why, everything is wrong," said Meyer, "because nothing is right."

"What do you want, then?"

"We want the one thing man is least able to do without; a tavern."

"Children of little faith," rejoined Samuel. "Give me five minutes and you will have everything you want. I am going with Julius to the burgomaster's house, to make out the riot-programme. Where is Trichter?"

"He stood there a few minutes ago, complaining of thirst."

"Look out for him in any place where gin is to be found, and send him to me that he may act as my secretary. I advise you not to make too much noise while your King is at work."

"All right, Samuel," thundered the whole company.

Samuel and Julius went into the house pointed out to them as the burgomaster's dwelling, and Trichter joined them almost immediately.

Scarcely had they entered ere the emigrants, faithful to their promise of silence, shouted in formidable tones:

"Pereat tristitia!
Pereant osores!
Pereat diabolus
Quivis antiburschius!"

CHAPTER XLVII

BURGOMASTER PFAFFENDORF

WHEN the burgomaster's door opened, Samuel, Julius and Trichter found themselves in the presence of an enormous person, with a bloated face which wore a scared expression.

"Is the burgomaster in?" asked Samuel.

"What do you want him for?" stammered the extraordinarily large man.

"To speak to him."

"You do not intend to harm him?" this Falstaff timidly ventured to say.

"On the contrary."

"Then, I am he."

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance," rejoined Samuel. "But you must have some other room than the bottom step of this staircase; if agreeable to you, we will take up our quarters in it."

The burgomaster, trembling all over, led them into his office. Samuel sat down.

"See here!" said he, "we take possession of Landeck. We hope that you will make no resistance, and that you will spare us the unpleasant necessity of making an attack on the houses. The University deigns to make this its headquarters for a time. You understand that we must, to a certain extent, have a free hand, and that we shall probably indulge in eccentricities which it will be advisable for you not to oppose. I am here to come to terms with you. You are the burgomaster of Landeck, and I am the King of the University. The hierarchy requires that you transfer your authority to me. I accept it. Thanks."

"But, gracious heaven," demurred the big burgomaster in a grave voice, "what in the world do you mean to do?"

"Oh! never fear, honest . . . . Pardon me, what am I to call you?"

"Pfaffendorf."

"Never fear, honest Pfaffendorf. We have come simply to study and amuse ourselves. We will entertain the village; we will give you fêtes. Will that suit you?"

"You promise to respect property and persons?"

"I pledge you my royal word."

"Thank goodness!" said Pfaffendorf, breathing more freely.

"It is agreed!" said Samuel.

"Agreed."

"Give me your hand on it, noble burgomaster, and have no fear that it is my intention to annihilate, nor even to diminish in any way your worthy importance. I will preserve you a rank befitting your position, and I promise you a place of honour at all entertainments and ceremonials."

"You are very kind," replied Pfaffendorf with a beaming face. "But I have just thought of something. If you require the militiamen of the village, I place them at your disposal."

"How many are there?"

"One!"

"Let us have him," said Samuel, "we will look after him."

"Do not hurt him. I will go and look for him."

The burgomaster went out of the room, delighted with Samuel.

In the office there was a table and a good supply of writing materials.

"Sit down there," said Samuel to Trichter.

"Now, then," Julius asked Samuel, "where are you going to find house-room for Heidelberg at Landeck? The castle is quite at your service, but it will be inadequate."

"To begin with," said Samuel, "it will be absolutely forbidden to approach the castle. We are here to obey Madame von Hermelinfeld, not to annoy her. We shall be very happy if she will condescend to be present at some of the entertainments which I intend to improvise, and we hope that, in spite of her nervousness, she will venture to attend. But she must follow her own inclination, and we will not thrust our close proximity upon her."

"Then, where do you intend to house them all?"

"Why, truly, at the most tempting sign of any on these fine August nights: 'Under the stars of Heaven!' The forest will be our green dormitory. If it rains, I have grottoes large enough to accommodate four hundred persons. Do not be afraid, these grottoes are in a different direction to those you know of. As to provisions, our people from Heidelberg have brought sufficient for a day, and to-morrow Landeck will be crammed with food, for the inhabitants will not be foolish enough to neglect to profit by the rain of gulden which falls on them from Heaven. They will lay in supplies to-night, and, at dawn, we shall be revelling in the abundance of a Gargantuan banquet."

Then turning to Trichter:

"Transcribe the orders of the day."

A quarter of an hour later, Trichter, standing on a chair, read out to the students, who swarmed round him, the following Napoleonic decree:

"We, Samuel I., Emperor of Foxes, Tyrant of Camels and Philistines, Protector of the Academic Confederation, etc.

"We have decreed, and do decree the following:

"GENERAL ORDERS:—

"*Art. I.*—Considering that there is no tavern at Landeck, all the houses of Landeck are converted into taverns.

"*Art. II.*—Considering however, that the houses of Landeck will not suffice for our colony, a camp, provided with all the comforts of life, will be formed in the wood; there will be tents of tick, beds of bracken, sofas of straw, divans of hay. Women, children, and valetudinarians, with certificate from the medical council, will alone inhabit the vile houses of lath and plaster.

"*Art. III.*—Rents, and general or special articles of refreshment to be paid for either out of the public funds, or out of the purses of the individual, as the case may be, except so far as goods that the inhabitants of Landeck may have purchased from Heidelberg are concerned. All merchandise coming from that excommunicated town will be confiscated without mercy. With this one exception, all outrage against properties, as also against persons, will be severely reprimanded and duly punished according to the disciplinary penalties in use in the Students' Guild.

"However, this rule applies only to the 'studentes,' and, in order to allow the noble inhabitants of Landeck absolute freedom, that glorious endowment of humanity, men will not be forbidden to lend, nor women to give, whatsoever they please.

"PROVISIONAL ORDERS :—

"The close of the first day will be employed in reconnoitring the ground and in installation.

"To-morrow, two placards will announce, the one the syllabus of lectures, the other the programme of amusements and rejoicings which are to be organised, in this promised land of Landeck, to sweeten and charm away for the 'studentes' the sadness of life.

"This very night, Julius von Eberbach bids his old comrades to a monster punch in the forest.

"Executed at Landeck, this 10th August, 1811.

"SAMUEL I.

"A true and faithful copy,

"TRICHTER."

The reading was interrupted with cheers. The promise of punch was hailed with especial delight. When Trichter had finished speaking, there was a perfect thunder of vivats and hurrahs.

The burgomaster Pfaffendorf arrived at this moment with the man who composed the Militia of Landeck.

Samuel caught hold of them and cried:

"All women, horses and luggage, to follow me."

Then, escorted by the burgomaster and the militiaman, who represented authority and consequently obviated the necessity of his employing force, he installed as best he could, in the houses of the village, the women, the bandboxes, and the carriages.

Afterwards he came back to the men:

"And you," he said, "who prefer the sky to a ceiling and the stars to candles, follow me."

CHAPTER XLVIII

FOREST REVELS

SAMUEL GELB led the troop along a pleasant road, winding upwards through wooded slopes. The students ascended for about a quarter of an hour; then, turning to the left, followed a narrow path that opened all of a sudden on to a vast platform two hundred feet square or thereabouts, and enclosed on all sides by a thick curtain of large trees.

The sun, which was setting behind the mountain, seemed as if anxious to make itself regretted, by bathing the branches of the trees in rosy-coloured light. A stream of sparkling water flowed over the pebbles on the borders of the woods, and made as much noise as it could with its tiny voice and its tiny cataracts. The singing of a million birds mingled with this entrancing sound and blended so harmoniously with it that the stream seemed to flow in notes and the singing to gush out in drops.

"Does this room suit you?" asked Samuel.

"*Viva vallera!*" the students replied.

"Very well! make this into your sleeping quarters."

The majority began to pitch tents, others to sling hammocks. Acting on Trichter's advice before starting, they had taken the precaution of providing themselves with all the canvas necessary. Fresswanst prepared to drive in his stakes.

But Trichter stopped him.

"Fresswanst," said he seriously, "you are departing from history."

"What history?" asked Fresswanst, astonished.

"The history of Robinson Crusoe."

"What is that?"

"Have you not read, dear fox of the

bottle, that Robinson, having no bedroom in his island, and afraid of wild beasts if he slept on the ground, climbed up into a tree and made his bed on one of the branches? I feel the noble desire to imitate this great example. To-night I shall not go to bed, I will go to roost."

"And supposing I fall from the top to the bottom?" Fresswanst asked uneasily.

"That will show that a parrot can beat you any day; Fresswanst," Tritcher added, lowering his voice, "we must give the lie to some evil reports that are being circulated about us, and prove to the younger generation that we never get tipsy. Look here, set your mind at rest, if you are afraid of falling, I will tie you up securely."

"All right. In that case, I give up my tent."

"Give it up for good, and do not let it be said that we have never been to bed in a nest."

By the time all these delightful preparations were made, night had fallen. The burgomaster, whom Samuel had invited to the entertainment, hastened thither long before the appointed time, and appeared upon the scene, radiant, proud and imposing, just as the students were sitting down to supper on the grass.

Pfaffendorf was greeted on his arrival, by shouts as pleasant to his soul as they were harsh to his ears. He admired Samuel's choice, and the quarters which the students had built for themselves.

"Capital! capital!" said he. "Upon my word! you have lopped off the finest branches and uprooted the young trees for the framework. That's very clever! my young friends, very clever indeed!"

The supper was a lively one, and never was more ready wit coupled with more hearty appetite.

At dessert, and when night had quite closed in, the servants from the castle, in obedience to Julius' instructions, arrived with two kegs of rum and brandy, and all the goblets from the cup-room. Under cover of the darkness, they were not seen, and were able, without further ado, to arrange the vessels, fill them, and set the brandy and rum alight.

Suddenly, with the rapidity of lightning, a bluish fire burst out in the forest. Blue, red and white flames danced in immense bowls, and flooded the green depths of the wood with fantastic lights. The awakened birds, marvelling that the dawn had, that night, returned so soon, began to sing.

"Long live Shakespeare!" cried Trichter. "We are in the midst of the fifth act of the Merry Wives of Windsor. There are the spirits dancing on the grass. I daresay we shall soon see Herne the Hunter appear. Let us look for him, oh, my friends! I would know him again; his brow is surmounted by two large stag horns. Ah! I see him, it's Pfaffendorf."

"I plead guilty," said the stout burgomaster, entering into the spirit of the joke. "I had concealed the fact for fear of alarming you, but now I am compelled to throw aside my incognito."

"To the health of Herne the Hunter!" shouted Trichter, seizing hold of an enormous goblet.

This was the signal. The punch was put out, poured into bowls and glasses, and the delights of the palate replaced the delights of the eye.

Libations, toasts, songs, followed each other in quick succession. Two hours later, a subdued hilarity had spread among the different groups. A sane spectator would have gazed with wonder at this phenomenon, everyone speaking at once, no one listening. Pfaffendorf began to stutter pleasantly and endeavoured to convince Trichter that he, old and a burgomaster though he was now, had once been young.

But Trichter obstinately refused to believe him.

That was the only cloud which marred Pfaffendorf's bliss on that enjoyable evening.

It did not, however, prevent his giving Trichter a cordial shake of the hand on leaving; then, having respectfully taken leave of Samuel, he started on his way home.

But we dare not assert that he reached there.

Julius, at last, tore himself away from the merry company, which brought him back the stir and bustle of life. He wished good-bye to Samuel.

"Well," Samuel asked, "are you glad to have seen your friends again?"

"I feel as if I had come back to life."

"Until to-morrow, I suppose?"

"Yes! to-morrow."

"You'll see," rejoined Samuel, "I will map out for them the most brilliant, the most active, the most full life they have ever conceived possible. I want to show Governments how to make the people happy! You'll see!"

Samuel accompanied Julius a little way. As they were about to separate, they heard a noise above their heads in one of the trees. They looked up, and, by the light of the stars, perceived Trichter, busily engaged in tying up Fresswanst, who, sitting on a cross branch, had his neck already fastened to the trunk of the tree, and, with a grave face, offered not the slightest resistance.

"Trichter," said Samuel, "what on earth are you doing?"

"I'm tucking up my friend for the night," Trichter answered.

Julius walked away roaring with laughter.

But he who had been the life of this multitude, the leader of this mirth, the main-spring of this bacchanal, Samuel Gelb, when he found himself alone, instead of going to sleep, plunged into the depths of the forest, and, sad and mournful, with knitted brows, his head on his breast, snapping the branches in his path, scattering the dead leaves beneath his feet, walked in the night like a wounded lion.

He thought:

"How fatiguing, and how wearisome! To shed life and merriment on all around, and feel doubt and anxiety within one's own breast! If I imagined myself capable of that stupid regret which we call remorse, I think, Heaven crush me! that I could be angry, not, perhaps, at what was done last night, but, at any rate, at the way in which it was done. Ah! my will! my will! It faltered, it yielded, it knew not whether to do right or wrong. I fled at sight of my deed, and then allowed it to master me. Dual cowardice!

"Oh! in that, I committed more than a crime, a mistake! a mistake which, for the furtherance of my plans, makes me anxious and uneasy. Am I going to persevere? in truth, I scarce can tell! Confound it! Why did I want to ruin Gretchen? In order to ruin Christiane. And Gretchen would save her! The goat herd to me was merely a way to the Viscontesse, and the means would deter me from the end! Ah! Samuel, you are brought low! Search your soul, at this moment; you are glad to have pledged your word not to appear before Christiane until summoned by her; you hope that she will not summon you, and you will carry out none of the resolutions you had made to constrain her to do so. You yield to woman-like scruples, you falter, you draw back . . . . , And, alas! poor wretch, you suffer!

"I am sick with vexation and disgust. Is there, then, something over and above my wish? I had said to myself, 'To rouse in one single breast a struggle between horror and desire, must be a strange experience, and one which may satisfy that fierce indescribable curiosity which devours me.' Well! no, quite the reverse, the remembrance of it is a painful one. Now, to effect the union of love and hate in two persons, to surrender indignant Christiane to impassioned Samuel, that would be more difficult, and nearer akin to this cruel ideal . . . . But, how should I be able to carry my whim to a successful issue?"

Thus ran Samuel Gelb's thoughts, while he bit his lip till the blood came. Meantime, the remembrance of Gretchen, dishonoured and driven to despair, never once flashed across the mind of this strange being.

But, whilst revolving these odious and daring thoughts, he still strode hurriedly on, and strangely enough, as he walked, this man, who so prided himself on his will power, obeyed some kind of mechanical instinct or imperative habit, and unthinkingly, without noticing the fact, he entered his subterranean passage, lighted a dark lantern, passed along the gloomy corridors, climbed two steep flights of steps, arrived at the door of Christiane's boudoir, and, as if in a dream, entered it. All was asleep in the castle, and the thick carpets muffled the sound of his footsteps.

He flashed the light from his lantern over every object and every piece of furniture, stopped in front of the rosewood writing-desk, opened it softly with a small key which he took from his pocket, and saw on the velvet shelf a letter ready sealed.

He read the address, "To the Baron von Hermelinfeld."

He cut the seal with a penknife, unfolded it, read it, then a smile came over his face and he slowly burnt the paper at the flame of his lantern.

Then he put a blank sheet of paper into the envelope, replaced the seal with skilful care, and closed the writing-desk again.

"Yet another sign of weakness!" said he to himself.

"Why prevent this letter from arriving at its destination? Am I not perfectly well aware that I disarm myself in disarming her?"

His eager piercing gaze rested on the door of the room in which Christiane lay asleep.

"Is it possible that a man like myself," he went on thinking, "cannot keep and brood over a thought for fourteen months without that thought in turn taking possession of and getting the mastery over him? Is it possible that I love this woman? Ha! ha! ha! Samuel Gelb in love! That remains to be seen."

He returned as in a dream to the corridor, and, still unconscious of what he did, regained his subterranean chamber.

CHAPTER XLIX

A STRANGE CURRICULUM

THE next morning before Christiane was up, Julius, who usually rose very much later than she, was already at the students' camp. He found them gay, noisy and singing merrily. They had spent this glorious summer's night, some sleeping under tents, some in hammocks slung between the trees, others simply lying flat on the grass their faces turned to the stars. They all declared that they had slept splendidly.

Fresswanst alone admitted that he had slept in a somewhat uncomfortable position; the weight of his body, which slumber only increased, had caused the rope that secured him, likewise the branch on which he was perched, to cut into his flesh, and he asked whether anyone felt inclined to purchase from him a zebra skin, which, until the night before, had belonged to him.

Trichter, on the contrary, was delighted with his night's rest. He pretended that only birds properly understood the art of bed-making, and begged all his friends to examine his back and see whether he had wings growing there.

The stream was responsible for the general ablutions, which were performed to the accompaniment of jokes and roars of laughter. Everything therefore betokened animation, freshness, youth, morning. It was a gipsy encampment, minus dirt, plus money.

Samuel, before daybreak, had left his subterranean chamber, and, in the privacy of the royal tent, was drawing up, as it behoves the chief of a revolution to do, the two promised programmes, the programme of studies and the programme of amusements.

He had at first indited them with this sole object in view: To rouse Christiane's curiosity, to make her think, to compel her to admire him, perhaps to force her to come to the camp, since he could not go to the castle.

Moreover, like the practical man that he was, he had had to think of the material side of his plans, and to the carrying of them into effect, to dispatch messengers to Darmstadt and to Mannheim, in fact to organise everything, whether for the maintenance or for the amusement of the improvident "studentes."

When he had completed all these difficult arrangements, he came out, cheered by unanimous consent, and gave instructions that his bills be posted up on the trees.

The student-people, contrary to custom, showed themselves delighted at the way in which their king had provided for the common weal. One thing in particular caused unbounded delight: the announcement, for one of the ensuing evenings, of a performance of Schiller's *Brigands*, to be acted on a stage built for the purpose in the forest, Samuel Gelb himself to play the part of Karl Moor. What a true king, thoughtful of the pleasures of his people! Nero alone in all history had this delicacy of feeling. Therefore, whatever aristocratic historians may say of him, his name, even at the present day, is still popular in Rome. The other promises on Samuel's announcements were no less tempting. But in contradistinction to the custom of programmes, they were all religiously maintained, or rather exceeded. It is therefore unnecessary to give a description of them in advance; we shall witness their performance.

As to the placard with reference to the studies, we subjoin a notable extract;—

"UNIVERSITY OF LANDECK

"LECTURES FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1811

"Considering that pleasure by and for itself leads at once to satiety and tedium, and that work should form the basis of life,

"We, Rector of the Sylvan University of Landeck, have decreed that daily lectures, particulars of which are given below, will be held, to replace with advantage lessons by the professors of Heidelberg.

"POLITICAL ECONOMY

"Professor: Samuel Gelb — He will demonstrate that Political Economy is the science of nothingness, the arithmetic of negation, and is only economical for the economists.

"THEOLOGY

"Professor: Samuel Gelb—He will prove that Theology leads to doubt concerning God, and that its chief use is to secure a living to theologians.

"CHEMISTRY

"Professor: Samuel Gelb—He will discourse upon the grand alchemy of nature, which seeks an absolute good, a treasure more undiscoverable than gold.

"HEBREW TONGUE

"Professor: Samuel Gelb — He will translate the Bible from the original text, and by identification of translators' errors, and commentators' interpolations, will demonstrate that, under pretext of divine revelation, mankind believes in lies set forth by men.

"LAW

"Professor: Samuel Gelb—He will consider conscientiously the principles of law, that is to say, human injustice, ambition and cupidity."

The syllabus continued in this strain. Medicine, literature, anatomy, history, all the professorships were to be filled by Samuel Gelb. That strange and universal professor was to show the reverse side of every science. The only lecture of any positive nature announced by him, was one on psychology, when he promised to discourse on his favourite subject: "The theory of will-power."

But it was well known that, scornful and amusing though he might be, he would still remain learned and profound, and not a single student would have willingly absented himself from the original teaching of this many-sided master, who was about to achieve the unheard-of feat of being in himself alone a whole university.

The afternoon, from two to six, was devoted to study.

The morning, until dinner, which was fixed for one o'clock, was given up to excursions on the river or in the forest.

For that very morning, arrangements were already made for a boating expedition on the Neckar. Stout, jovial Pfaffendorf, having received notice the previous evening from the king of the students, had put into requisition all the boats on the river, and when the whole troop arrived at the "rendezvous" agreed upon, it found an entire flotilla of both sailing and rowing boats.

Pfaffendorf was there, dressed in his best; maroon coat, white cravat, square hat, silken breeches, coloured stockings, and shoes with buckles.

Taken unawares, the previous day, by the sudden invasion of the students, Pfaffendorf feared that his every-day clothes had not given a correct impression of himself; he wanted his revenge, and, determined to dazzle his young friends, he had not even been deterred by the fear of spoiling his holiday attire in a boat, and of exposing his ancient silk stockings to the splashings of the oars.

The plucky burgomaster threw himself into Samuel's boat, with the recklessness of a man dressed in his oldest clothes. He even carried forgetfulness of what he was wearing to the extent of rowing himself, to the loud applause of Trichter.

The excursion was a delightful one. The Neckar is a miniature Rhine; frowning fortresses, suspended like eagles' nests on the summits of rocks; gay villagers, assembled in groups in the heart of some luxuriant valley; wild and narrow gorges, like the entrance into hell, leading suddenly to rich smiling country, like the threshold of paradise; such were the wonderful and varied scenes which, within a few hours, unfolded themselves to the eyes and the minds of our students, whilst their oars struck the water in cadence, and their voices in unison awoke with patriotic songs the quiet echoes of the Neckar asleep for long years in their grottoes.

Julius had intended to return to the castle immediately on landing. But he then discovered that the hour for the lecture was drawing near, and he was quite as eager as any of his old comrades to hear Professor Samuel. So he dined with the merry band, and afterwards attended the lecture.

It was such as was to be expected considering the learned and humorous irony of this master-scoffer. A shudder ran through the audience at more than one of his terrible sallies on this life and the next. The sceptic doctor questioned the Creator of creation, God in humanity, with that daring criticism, and bold frankness which was already tolerated in absolutist Germany, and which is not allowed even at the present day in democratic France.

The discourse over, it was six o'clock.

Julius debated within himself whether it was now worth his while to return to the castle before night The evening promised to be a worthy ending to this already full day; the programme ran as follows: "Supper by torchlight, and concert in the wood." Christiane knew where her husband was and could not possibly feel anxious. Besides, he had only to send her word.

He wrote a note, saying that he would return home earlier than the previous evening, and asking her to send his two whippers-in. The supper under the trees, illuminated with coloured lamps, was most fantastic and most entertaining. During the meal, Julius' two prickers, lost in the intricacies of the wood, sounded the distant, dreamy, harmonies of the hunting-horn, calling and answering each other like a harmonious echo. A pleasing dialogue, that startled the deer at this unaccustomed hour, and which led them to mistake the pale reflex of the moon for the grey light of dawn.

After supper, those of the students who possessed instruments, and part of the orchestra from the theatre at Mannheim, which Samuel, availing himself of the dramatic holidays, had taken the precaution of securing the previous day, improvised an excellent concert and played some of the finest selections from Mozart, Gluck, and Beethoven, eliciting enthusiastic applause from the select audience.

After these hours of delight, one can understand that Julius again felt reluctant to return.

"You know," Samuel said to him, "that we have a big hunt to-morrow."

"Yes, I know," Julius replied.

But in his heart he began to feel uncomfortable at leaving Christiane so much alone.

"Look here," he added, "of course it would not be quite the thing for Christiane to come to one of our river parties or to our suppers, but did you not say that there could be no objection to her following the hunt on horseback or in a carriage? She would enjoy that."

"I have promised her not to give any signs of life unless she herself summons me," Samuel answered coldly; "she is perfectly well aware that we should deem it an honour and a pleasure if she took part in our amusements. You speak to her about it and bring her."

"Yes," Julius said, "I will speak to her about it this very evening, for I cannot always leave her like this, and either she must come with me, or I must remain with her."

On his return, Julius gave Christiane a glowing description of the river excursion in the morning and the music in the evening. He told her of the hunting expedition arranged for the next day and insinuated that she ought to be of the party. She could follow in a carriage if she wished, and keep as much out of the way as she thought fit; she would see without being seen.

Christiane, who looked grave and rather sad, flatly refused.

They parted displeased with one another; she vexed with her husband for being happy, he vexed with his wife for being sad.

CHAPTER L

TRICHTER AND FRESSWANST REACH THE CLIMAX OF EPIC ACHIEVEMENT

BAYING of hounds, shouts of students, discussions with Julius' whippers-in, neighing of horses, flourish of horns, loading of guns, exchange of ammunition, all these preparations for hunting, more enjoyable than the hunt itself, animated with expectation and pleasure the dawn of the third day.

The "studentes" equipped themselves as best they could. An alarming rise had been declared on the market value of all guns in the environs. The greater number had been hired at double their cost.

A few female-students, curious like women, and courageous like men, were on horseback with a loaded gun in their hands, and imparted a less severe character to this Vander-Meulen picture.

Julius found Samuel giving orders for the hunt like a commander-in-chief.

"I had forgotten to tell you, Julius," Samuel said jokingly, "that I have also gone in for a little hunting. Moreover you have splendid whippers-in. They have beaten the wood in masterly fashion, and discovered for us the trail of a stag and of a wild boar. With the pack, which is royal, my boy, we should have splendid sport."

The signal was no sooner given than students and hounds bounded away helter skelter, all at the same time, baying and shouting. For, despite of efforts on Samuel's part, this was not a steady, orthodox hunt, it was a wild, impetuous run, which had also its charm. The flourish of horns, the startled or joyous laughter of the women, the shouts of the men, the yelping of the hounds, the random shots of ignorant or impatient hunters, all these sounds mingled and swept through the forest like a living hurricane.

The fine strategical arrangements of Samuel and the whippers-in triumphed, however, over all this indiscipline. The stag was run down first, then came the wild boar's turn.

A tremendous flourish was merrily sounded by the horns, and drowned the death-rattle of the wild beast; then the wild boar and the horns were silent.

At this moment a sound of dance music was heard approaching.

The animated scraping of two violins formed an accompaniment to these happy voices. At intervals could be heard outbursts of ringing laughter.

Two minutes later, there appeared in sight, at the end of the path where the huntsmen were still assembled, about twenty couples dressed all in their best and with happy faces.

It was the wedding party of Gottlob and Rose, who had been married that very morning.

On perceiving the students, the wedding party seemed about to turn to the left, as if startled.

But Samuel went up to Rose.

"Madame Bride," said he gallantly, "permit us to offer you for your wedding supper two dishes of game: a wild boar and a stag. If you will be kind enough to invite us, we will all sup together and dance until morning. Will you do me the honour of granting me the first quadrille?"

Rose looked at Gottlob, who made her a sign to accept.

The union of the hunt and the wedding was sealed by a horn and violin duet, and the parties separated to meet again in the evening.

"Now for a lesson in history!" said the indefatigable Samuel, "and I am going to make a Rabelaisian dissertation on the institution of marriage, from Adam to the present day."

"Bravo! that is the right kind of knowledge!" shouted the audience, delighted in anticipation.

Was it the result of this open-air life? was it the example of this indomitable Samuel, always ready, never tired! Certain it is that in the last three days the students' abilities seemed to have increased tenfold; material activity and moral activity were multiplied the one by the other, and the body found rest in the working of the mind.

The wedding supper in the evening was magnificent. The burgomaster Pfafferdorf made himself splendidly tipsy. When there was nothing left of the game but bones, and nothing of the wine but bottles, a ritornello struck up and the ball began, Samuel took Rose's hand, and Lolotte accepted Pfaffendorf as her partner.

The students engaged the prettiest girls in the place, and the "grisettes" shared the millers and farmers between them. And until morning the wildest, maddest dancing was kept up to confirm the fusion of Heidelberg with Landeck.

Trichter and Fresswanst did not dance; they drank.

At midnight Samuel Gelb, that courteous tyrant who, in matter of excess and abuse, neither feared nor proscribed either, except those of pleasure, ruthlessly gave the signal to retire.

"Here comes the hardest time of all!" sighed Trichter. "I must go and lead Lolotte back to Landeck—oh! to her very door."

"Well! I will accompany you," said Fresswanst with emotion.

"Thanks, noble heart!" said Trichter, grasping his hand.

So the twin-drinkers, silent and grave, together accompanied lively, talkative Lolotte as far as the village. When they had virtuously reinstated her in her domicile, Trichter said to Fresswanst:

"I am thirsty."

"I thought so," was Fresswanst's rejoinder. With an eloquent gesture and a happy smile, Trichter pointed out to his friend a doorway, over which the uncertain brightness of this fine clear night enabled him to distinguish a crown of vine leaves.

Without another word Trichter knocked at the door. No one answered and nothing stirred. Trichter knocked a second time more loudly.

For only answer a dog barked.

"Hallo! hey!" cried Trichter and Fresswanst, kicking at the door with their feet.

The dog began to yelp furiously.

"We three together," said Trichter, "we shall probably succeed in rousing someone. Ah! there's a window opening."

"What do you want?" asked a voice.

"Brandy," Trichter answered. "We are two poor travellers who have had nothing to drink for the last five minutes."

"The fact is my husband is not here," went on the voice.

"We don't want your husband, we want brandy."

"Wait a moment."

Two minutes later an old woman opened the door to them. She was half asleep, and her eyes blinked even more than the candle which she held in her hand. She put the candle on a table, placed two glasses beside it, and still half asleep, groped about in a cupboard.

"Dear me! there is not another drop of spirits here," she said. "My husband has just gone to Neckarsteinach to get a fresh supply. Ah! after all, here is a little remnant of brandy."

She placed a bottle two-thirds empty on the table.

"Barely four small glasses!" said Trichter, making a horrible grimace. "A drop of water in the desert! However, we may as well refresh ourselves with this mere nothing."

They tossed it off at one gulp, paid the old woman, and went away grumbling and swearing.

The old woman, before going back to bed, set to arranging some plates and dishes, and was still up when a quarter of an hour later her husband returned.

"How comes it you are awake at this hour, old girl?" said he.

"Oh, along of two students who made me get up to give them brandy!"

"Brandy? There was none left," said the man, relieving himself of his parcels.

"But there was!" rejoined the innkeeper's wife. "I found there was a little remaining in the bottom of this bottle."

The husband looked intently at the empty bottle.

"They have drunk that?" said he, trembling all over.

"Why, yes," replied the wife.

"Unhappy woman!" he exclaimed, tearing his hair.

"Whatever is the matter with you?"

"Do you know what you have given to those two poor young fellows?"

"Brandy?"

"Brandy! No, *aqua fortis*, I tell you, dilute *aqua fortis!*"

We have left the universe uneasy as to the fate of Trichter and Fresswanst. These two were really very great drinkers.

The imprudent wife of the taverner was put to infinitely more torture yet, which was but fair.

On hearing her husband utter the words, *aqua fortis,* she turned positively green.

"Oh God!" she stammered out. "I was half asleep . . . . it was dark . . . . I served them without seeing very clearly . . . ."

"Ah well! we are in a fine pickle!" rejoined the man. "By this time, these young people are dead or in their death-agony on the road. And as for us, we shall be arrested as poisoners."

The woman burst into tears and wanted to throw herself pathetically into the arms of her husband, but he pushed her from him roughly.

"Yes, cry, do! a lot of good that will do us. Why could you not pay more attention! What are we going to do? Escape? We should be caught again! Ah! my uncle was quite right in advising me not to marry you, forty-one years ago!"

We will draw a veil over the night of anguish and tears which this Philemon and Baucis spent in upbraiding each other.

At daybreak, Baucis was on her door-step, awaiting her fate. Suddenly she uttered a cry: she had just caught sight of two men, no! two ghosts, without doubt!—walking along the road and making straight for her house.

"What is it?" asked her husband, shaking from head to foot.

"It's them!" said the woman.

"Them! who, them?"

"The two young men."

"Ah!" the husband stammered, sinking on to a chair.

Trichter and Fresswanst entered as quietly and simply as if nothing had happened and sat at the table.

"Let us have some brandy!" said Trichter.

"The same," he added.

"Yes, the same, it had a splendid flavour," said Fresswanst.

CHAPTER LI

A DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS

THUS passed three or four days for the emigrant-students, in the midst of ever-fresh delights which the strange and powerful genius of Samuel knew how to extract from everything within his reach; from the forest and from the river, from the village and from the castle, from knowledge and from pleasure, from dreams and from reality.

Meanwhile the news received from Heidelberg heightened, by contrast, the merriment at Landeck. A fox who, much against his will, had been detained at the excommunicated town through rather serious indisposition, had rejoined his comrades as soon as he was able to move. He gave a gloomy account of Heidelberg.

The streets were deserted, the shops empty. A silence as of death hovered over the doomed town. Not a sound by day, not a light by night! The shop-keepers shut themselves up sadly tête-a-tête with their wares and their wives. The professors, having no pupils to teach, quarrelled amongst themselves. All this learning of the professors, all these materials of the drapers, all these wines of the innkeepers, intended to circulate in brains, on shoulders, and down throats, accumulated and stagnated dismally in the shops and in the deserted lecture-rooms like slime on a fetid marsh.

Professors and shopkeepers were now at loggerheads, the one throwing the responsibility of the emigration on the other.

"Why had the merchants offended Trichter? Why had the professors condemned Samuel?" The time was approaching when a civil war would break out between the academy and the counter.

This news only had the effect of increasing the animation of the encampment, and, on that very evening, Samuel celebrated it by a splendid display of fireworks which he had been preparing for the last three days.

He had arranged for the fireworks to be sent off on the opposite bank of the Neckar. Nothing more strange or more lovely than the sight of the bombs and rockets reflected in the river, and the fires flashing in mid-air repeated in the reddened waters beneath. The effect was that of two distinct displays of fireworks, one in the sky, one in the waves.

The entire population of Landeck was on the river bank, with the exception of Christiane and Gretchen. But Samuel had selected his place accordingly, and knew perfectly well that the refractory ones would have to be spectators of the fire-scene, whether they would or no, and that the great red flames would search them out, the one in her hut, the other in her castle.

Gretchen, in point of fact, saw them; she turned pale and murmured, "The devil is playing with fire, it is quite natural!" She rushed away, half scared, and shut herself into her hut, hiding her face in her hands to shut out the fiery flashes that dyed her windows and her walls. Everything that reminded her of Samuel horrified her now.

Everything that reminded Christiane of Samuel as yet only made her feel afraid. Attracted to her balcony by the glow in the sky, she remained there, pondering over the inexplicable reserve of Samuel, and the involuntary neglect of Julius.

She was indeed compelled to acknowledge the truth of what Samuel had told her, as to her husband's weak, wavering disposition. There was still much of the child in this young man, who, no doubt, at this very moment, was loudly applauding Samuel's firework display.

Christiane felt that she was fast losing her hold upon Julius. What could she do to keep him? Was she acting wisely in holding herself aloof from his amusements? By refusing to go with him, by accustoming him to do without her, would she not accustom him to think of his wife as apart from his pleasures? Would it not be best that the two should be connected in his mind? Would she not be acting more prudently in identifying herself so entirely with the amusements and the happiness of her husband, that he would be unable to dissociate them from her? Poor gentle Christiane asked herself what objection there could be, after all, to her taking part a little in all these pleasures necessary to Julius. Of course she would only take part in them at a distance, and up to the limits of decorum. What could result from her action? Samuel would perhaps exult over it and think that he had made her yield. Well! after all, Samuel was one of those natures whose mind is set upon obstacles, and the more she held aloof, the more did she irritate him. Samuel, in short, had so far kept strictly to his promise that he would not attempt to see her again. After all, had she been wise in writing to Baron von Hermelinfeld? Supposing she changed her tactics? By accompanying her husband she gained a double advantage; she re-awakened the love of Julius, and she extinguished the hatred of Samuel.

So that evening she watched for Julius' return, went brightly to meet him, and herself asked for an account of how they had spent the day. He did not require pressing.

"So you have thoroughly enjoyed yourself?" she said.

"I acknowledge that I have. That fellow Samuel does know how to live."

"Is it not to-morrow evening that they are to act the *Robbers?*"

"Yes, to-morrow evening," Julius replied. "Oh! if you would only consent to come with me!"

"Well! I feel strongly tempted to do so. As you know, Schiller is my favourite poet."

"That's right, then!" exclaimed Julius delighted. "So that's settled. No more difficulties; I shall come for you to-morrow evening."

And he kissed Christiane effusively.

"It is pretty nearly a week since he has given me so loving a kiss!" thought Christiane sadly.

CHAPTER LII

A DRESS REHEARSAL

THE day on which the *Robbers* was to be played, each of the students, apart from the two hours for study, was at liberty to spend the time as he chose, and to devote it either to his "liaisons" or to his own particular branch of study.

Samuel Gelb, that great stage manager, knew to how great an extent pleasure is stimulated by expectation and desire, and that all light is only appreciated by comparison with darkness. Samuel Gelb, that politician, considered that in every society, were it only a society for amusement and pleasure, a large portion should be left to the liberty and the caprice of the individual. In a word, Samuel, that great practical man, knew that he himself needed the entire day to complete his preparation for the performance in the evening.

The scene of the *Robbers* is laid almost entirely in the forest, therefore, as with the ancients, the decoration happened to be ready-made naturally. Instead of canvas and cardboard as at Mannheim, there was, as at Athens, real foliage and a real wood. For the scenes of interiors, large canvases boldly painted, were placed between the trees to represent rooms. Samuel had had no difficulty in improvising his theatre; wings and exits had not been wanting.

He took much more pains over the dress rehearsal. But his actors were so docile, so enthusiastic, and such scholars, that with them he entertained no doubt of the success of Schiller's masterpiece.

The rehearsal was at the scene when the monk comes to offer a full and entire pardon to the brigands on condition that they deliver up their chief, Karl Moor, when word was brought to Samuel that a deputation from the academic council of Heidelberg had come to make proposals to the students.

"Bring them here," said Samuel. "They arrive at an opportune moment."

Three professors entered. One acted as spokesman. The council of Heidelberg offered, if the students agreed to return to their duty, free pardon to all; with the exception of Samuel, who would be expelled from the University.

"My most worthy envoys," said Samuel, "this scene bears a devilish strong resemblance to the very one we are rehearsing at the present moment."

And turning towards the students:

"Listen now, all of you, what the law commands I should make known to you. Will you handcuff and deliver up at once this condemned malefactor to the constituted authorities? The punishment of your crimes will be remitted; the sacred 'University' will receive you with renewed affection into her maternal bosom like sheep that have gone astray, and each one of you will be given a fresh start in life."

A shout of unanimous laughter greeted this borrowed version of Schiller.

One of the professors addressed himself to the students:

"It is to you, gentlemen, to you only we are speaking, and we hope that you will reply to us in different fashion than by ill-timed jests."

"Pardon me! I am quite serious," rejoined Samuel, "and quite seriously do I, as a true Karl Moor, advise my comrades to accept your conditions, to make short work of me, and to return to Heidelberg and resume the regular course of study. This, certainly, is not a place where they will obtain diplomas, or give their parents satisfaction."

"But we," said a "Mossy Head," "we in our turn, answer like true Schiller robbers, that we will not abandon our chief. A less meritorious action on our part than on that of Karl Moor's companions; for we incur no risk to either body or mind, not being exposed, gentlemen, so far as I know, to either your bullets or your lectures."

"But come," replied the professor, "what do you ask to return?"

"We leave it to Samuel," replied the "Mossy Head."

"Yes, Samuel! Samuel!" cried the whole band.

"Well! what might be the pretentions put forth by Monsieur Samuel Gelb?" replied the spokesman of the University in bitter tones. "We would be very glad to know his wishes, out of curiosity."

Samuel then began to speak, with the air of a Coriolanus.

"You have mistaken the part you have to play, gentlemen," said he, "in coming here with the object of imposing conditions upon us. We have none to receive, but to dictate. Listen, this is our decision, and I advise you to tell those who have sent you, that it is irrevocable. Pardon for all, for me, as well as for the others, that of course is self-evident. But, furthermore, the tradespeople who have tried to bully Trichter, will come here to apologise. As war-tax, Trichter's debts will be considered as paid off, and an indemnity of five hundred florins will be granted him besides. Finally an indemnity of a thousand florins will be handed over to each of the students wounded in the fray. On these conditions alone do we consent to return to Heidelberg. If you say 'No,' we shall reply 'No, thank you.'

"Trichter, conduct the deputies of the Academy as far as the limits of Landeck."

The three professors considered it due to their dignity not to say one word in reply, and went back crestfallen.

"We will now proceed with the rehearsal, gentlemen," Samuel said quietly to his actors, "and will those who are taking no part in the play be good enough to withdraw?"

When the rehearsal was over, and Julius told Samuel that he was going to fetch Christiane, Samuel, despite his self-control, could not repress a gleam of joy.

"Ah! she is coming!" said he. "Be quick, Julius, for night is upon us; and we will begin as soon as it is dark."

Julius went off, and Samuel, feeling almost uneasy, went to dress.

An hour later, Julius returned with Christiane. The Frau von Eberbach was received with respect by the students. A special place had been prepared for her in the front row, in such a manner as to isolate her in the crowd.

Christiane's heart was beating fast; this was the first time since his daring challenge that she was to see Samuel at close quarters.

In the midst of a deep and sympathetic silence the play began.

CHAPTER LIII

"THE ROBBERS"

EVERYBODY knows that Schiller's *Robbers* is one of the most poignant, the most terrible, the most daring outcries of protest ever raised against social life in former days. Karl Moor, the son of a Count, declares war against constituted justice, against established order, and, so as to constitute himself, in his own way, the judge and redresser of wrongs, becomes a bandit, but maintains, through all his crimes, so exalted an ideal of energy and pride, that all interest remains riveted on this brigand, and that, from beginning to end, right seems always on the side of the rebel.

The play, popular all over Germany, is an especial object of veneration to eager, hot-blooded youth, to all who imagine themselves strong, to all who believe themselves free. Not one of the students of Heidelberg but knew the *Robbers* almost by heart; but the impression which the master-piece produced upon them was always fresh, and always more profound, and that evening they listened to the drama as if they heard it for the first time.

Yet the first scene did not produce the usual impression; Samuel had not yet appeared. But at the second from the moment that Karl Moor entered, some instinctive emotion stirred every breast.

Of commanding stature, with a broad forehead, his look expressive of bitterness, disdain, passion, scorn of orthodox virtues, revolt against social quibbles, the original Karl Moor seemed to live again in Samuel.

But, although in his own estimation Samuel Gelb considered himself, perhaps, greater than Karl Moor, because his enemy was the Almighty, because he challenged not only one man, but God, Christiane at the very time could and did assert to herself that the unworthy seducer of Gretchen was infinitely beneath the murderer of the Bohemian forests; because in the depths of his soul must be hatred, not love.

But, to any one who knew nothing of his life, and judged only of his acting, the illusion was striking, and when the curtain rose on Karl Moor absorbed in the reading of his Plutarch, Samuel's attitude was so perfect, his air so imposing, that only at sight of him a thunder of applause burst forth.

And in what a tone of sarcasm did Samuel, pacing up and down with rapid strides, utter the famous anathema:

"What! imprison my body in a strait-jacket, and submit my will to the embrace of the law? never! The law? it reduces the flight of the eagle to the slowness of the snail. The law? has it ever produced a great man? The real mother of giants and prodigies is liberty! Place me at the head of a troop of men of a like calibre to myself, and I undertake to make of Germany a republic compared with which Rome and Sparta would resemble the convents of nuns."

Meanwhile, Karl Moor, spurned by his father in favour of his brother, rises furiously in opposition to that society from which he is banished, and consents to be captain of his comrades who have become outlaws. Samuel was thinking no doubt of the injustice and desertion of his own father, because never did any great comedian attain to the convincing truth with which he cried:

"Murderers! brigands! with these words do I trample the law under my feet. Avaunt, sympathy! compassion, avaunt! I have now no father and no love. Blood and death must make me forget that ever did I hold anything dear.

Come, come. Oh! I thirst for some terrible diversion."

Samuel uttered these words with such savage emphasis, that a shudder passed over the audience. A wild light gleamed in his eyes.

Christiane trembled. It seemed to her that Samuel's glance had fallen upon her; an electric shock thrilled through her. She regretted having come.

There was so much analogy between the part and the actor, that, at times, she could scarcely tell whether it was Samuel who impersonated Karl Moor, or Karl Moor who impersonated Samuel.

This brigand, who made crime appear grander than virtue, and who seemed too great to be confined by the narrow prejudices of society, terrified Christiane. Then, all at once, he was another man.

The remembrance of her whom he loved and whom he still loves, flashes one day across the blood-stained, polluted life of Karl Moor, like a ray of sunshine into an abyss. An uncontrollable longing seizes him; he must see his Amelia once again, and, instantly, he hurries off all his docile companions into Franconia. In disguise he enters into the paternal castle alone, and, being shown round the gallery of portraits by Amelia herself, who does not recognise him, he questions her anxiously as to what she has had to endure.

Instantly all the haughty fierceness of Samuel Karl melted into burning passion. A tear dimmed the brightness of his hitherto unrelenting eyes, and when Amelia betrays her emotion, at sight of Karl's portrait, and flies from him blushing, Samuel cried: "She loves me! she loves me!" in such a transport of happiness and triumph, that thunders of applause arose on all sides, and Christiane grew pale and trembled with emotion and fear.

But the tenderness lasts but a moment. The bandit soon throws off this passing impression, forces back his rising tears, his violence returns, and was it not the blasphemy of Samuel Gelb himself who uttered that odious defiance:

"No, no, man may not stumble. Be what you will, nameless being up above, provided that my 'ego' remain faithful to me. Be what you will, provided that I preserve my 'ego' wherever I go. Outward things are but the trappings of the man. Myself am my heaven and my hell!"

Nevertheless, Karl Moor experiences yet another return to tenderness when Amelia, knowing what he is, loves him in spite of all, and clasps her arms about him.

"She forgives me! She loves me! I am pure as the blue of heaven. She loves me! Peace has returned to my soul. Pain is soothed. Hell is no more! See! oh, see! the children of light embrace with tears the demons who weep."

Samuel threw into these sublime words a depth of anguish and feeling which again affected Christiane, despite herself. For a moment the thought crossed her mind that it might not be wholly impossible to reclaim Samuel, and that beneath the dark workings of this terrible mind there might perhaps lurk some semblance of a heart.

But no, evil is too tenacious for that. It does not let those whom it has seized escape so easily. A great criminal cannot change his ways. Any reconciliation between crime and innocence is impossible. Amelia is condemned. Fatality must run its course. The love of Karl cannot but be fatal. His wild companions will not tolerate his leaving them. They place their blood-stained swords between him and his beloved, they tear off their garments, show him the wounds which they have received for his sake, and remind him of the forests of Bohemia, of his oaths, of the community of crime, which binds him to them. Karl is their possession. They had bought him in bondage with their heart's blood. Sacrifice for sacrifice, Amelia for the band!

And already one of them takes aim at Amelia. But Karl Moor snatches the gun from him and kills his beloved with his own hand.

Christiane uttered a cry. She felt as if Samuel had aimed at her, and as if his bullet had penetrated her heart.

Julius smiled, thinking that Christiane's terror was simply the effect produced usually upon women by the report of a gun. Christiane recovered her composure during the last words of the play, and her emotion explained itself easily by the dramatic ending of the masterpiece. The curtain was lowered in the midst of thundering applause. Samuel was recalled and received a frantic ovation.

"Quickly! let us go! let us go!" Christiane said to her husband.

"As soon as we have congratulated Samuel," said Julius.

CHAPTER LIV

GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH

JULIUS hurriedly led Christiane behind the scenes.

On seeing them, Samuel came up to them, still attired in his handsome yet sombre costume, still pale from his real or simulated passion.

Julius shook him by the hand with enthusiasm.

"You were splendid!" said he. "You are and you do whatever you wish!"

"You think so?" rejoined Samuel with his evil smile.

Christiane said nothing. But her pallor, her emotion and her silence spoke for her.

Julius, who, in his loyalty, suspected nothing and was anxious to break the ice, moved away unconcernedly and engaged in conversation with some of his comrades, leaving Samuel alone with Christiane.

Samuel began to speak with that respectful ease which with him seemed always a cloak for irony.

"Allow me to thank you, madame, for having deigned to be present at one of our entertainments. So far, they have not met with your approval, and yet, for whom has all this been organised, if not for you? Is it not you who desired this transplantation of a town? Is it not at your command that I have brought to Julius the life of Heidelberg?"

"Which proves," Christiane replied almost in a whisper, "that we occasionally repent of our wishes."

"You repent having brought us here?" asked Samuel. "Does this crowd begin to bore you? Then say but the word, madame, and, as I made these people come here, so I will make them return there."

"Would you do this?" said Christiane.

"Whenever you wish, on my word of honour. Besides, it is best that adventures of this sort should not be too prolonged, so that they may remain in the memory like a lightning flash, which passes and is gone. During these eight days, my people have not known a moment's dulness, the sky has been blue and cloudless. It is time for us to go. We weary you; I will rid you of us, of me the first."

Christiane bowed with cold courtesy.

"I only hope," continued Samuel, "that our little journey will not have been altogether fruitless as regards your happiness. Julius, it is true, needed rousing. You see, madame, your dear husband is a clock of which I have the honour of being the clock maker. I give him back to you wound up for at least three months."

"Herr Samuel. . . . . ." Christiane interrupted with dignity.

"Pardon, madame," rejoined Samuel, "I had no wish to offend. Never, I suppose, will I accustom myself to the idea that the truth can offend. Yet, according to ordinary notions, I should be considered, what shall I say? wanting in decorum, is it not? if, for example, trying to read your thoughts, I ventured to conjecture that, during this play, the passion which, was in reality, beyond my control, succeeded in affecting you by its sincerity and its vigour. . . . ."

"But I would not hesitate to admit that," said Christiane.

"If I made bold, then," Samuel went on, "to suppose that you may have drawn comparisons between this passionate ardour, and the weak sensitiveness of Julius. . . . . '

Christiane again interrupted Samuel: "Monsieur Samuel," said she firmly, "I love no one in the world but my husband and my child. They have my whole soul. These affections satisfy the aspirations of my heart. It is rich enough thus and has never dreamed of comparing its riches with those of others."

"Oh stony virtue!" Samuel exclaimed bitterly. "This harshness may perhaps be honourable, madame, but it is not diplomatic. Who knows if with a little less pride and unkindness, a little more cunning and ingenuity, you would not have softened my heart, weaker in reality, than I imagined? Why not even try to deceive me, alas!"

Christiane realised the strategical mistake she had made when dealing with so formidable an opponent.

"I, in my turn, sir," she said, "can only repeat that I had no wish to offend."

"We will say no more about it," Samuel replied coldly. "There only remains, madame, for me to bid you adieu. I have given you my word never to reappear before you until the ring of your bell shall summon the most humble of your servants. Don't be afraid, I forget nothing, you understand, nothing that I have promised."

"What! nothing?" Christiane faltered.

"Nothing! madame?" rejoined Samuel, who had again assumed his menacing tone. "In point of words and oaths, I have the failing and the misfortune of a pitiless memory; Gretchen has perhaps told you so?"

"Gretchen!" exclaimed Christiane, shuddering. "Oh! sir, how dare you utter her name?"

"What has been done, madame, has been done solely for your sake."

"For my sake! Ah! sir, do not make me an accomplice, even though involuntary, of so abominable a crime."

"For you, madame!" Samuel insisted, "to convince you that when I love and when I desire, I do not even stop at crime."

Happily for Christiane's agitation and alarm, Julius returned just then.

"I have been congratulating your actors and our comrades," said he. "Now, I am quite at your service. I'll see you to-morrow, Samuel"

"To-morrow, Julius, we may not be here."

"What! are you returning to Heidelberg so soon?" said Julius.

"Probably."

"But you do not intend to accept the conditions laid down by the professors, I suppose?"

"Oh! no," rejoined Samuel. "But to-morrow they will accept ours."

"So much the better!" said Julius. "Never mind! I will contrive to see you again before you leave, so will say good-bye only for to-night."

"Good-bye, sir," Christiane said to Samuel.

"*Au revoir*, madame," was Samuel's reply.

Samuel had not been too bold in his conjectures. On the following day, the deputies from the academic council returned, accompanied by the tailor, the shoemaker and the pork-butcher who gave the honourable Trichter a thrashing. All the students' conditions were accepted, the indemnities agreed to. The three tradesmen made a humble apology in their own name, and in that of the other tradespeople.

Trichter proved himself worthy of the occasion. He received gravely the receipted account from his tailor, heard the petition of his three adversaries, and when they had finished, he said amiably:

"You are scoundrels, but I forgive you."

It was not without regret that the students quitted this exquisite wood, where they had spent such delightful days. They set out immediately after breakfast, and reached Heidelberg at dusk.

The whole town was illuminated. The townsfolk, standing in their doorways, waved their caps in the air and cheered their loudest, while, under their breath, they cursed those rascally young students who always contrived to get their own way; and all that evening Heidelberg presented the joyful yet crestfallen appearance of a town taken by assault after a protracted siege and long famine, to which the conqueror brings, at the same time, confusion and provisions.

CHAPTER LV

THE WORKINGS OF FATE

TWO months passed away. The autumn was already decking the woods and fields in its golden mantle, and a thick carpet of dead leaves muffled the noise of the wheels of the Baron von Hermelinfeld's post-chaise, as, on a grey October day, it rolled along the road from Frankfort to Eberbach.

From the back of the carriage, the baron, careworn and gloomy, his head supported on his hand, vaguely watched the trees and bushes fly past along the road. All of a sudden, he saw a human creature speed like an arrow from the top of a steep incline, and alight, or rather fall in front of the horses, and nearly under the wheels, crying: "Stop! stop!"

Despite her altered looks and wild appearance, the baron recognised Gretchen. He ordered the postillion to stop.

"What is the matter, Gretchen?" he asked anxiously; "has there been any accident at the castle?"

"No," Gretchen replied in a strange tone, "God watches over them still; but Samuel watches too. You will arrive in time. And, yet, will you be as powerful for good, as he is for evil? However that may be, my duty is to warn you, even at the cost of my blushes and my shame. And on seeing you from up there I hastened at once, because the instinct for good, which the devil has not been able to kill in me, commands me to speak to you."

"Not just now, my child," Baron von Hermelinfeld answered kindly. "The grave and sad event that brings me to Eberbach, does not allow of the least delay. I have not a moment to lose. But can you tell me, Gretchen, whether I shall find my son at home?"

"At home? What do you call his home?" replied Gretchen; "do you then imagine that he is master in his house? No, he is not the lord, nor is his wife the lady of the castle. Yet, perhaps it is she who has sent for you . . . . ? Did she ask you to come, tell me?"

"Are you raving or feverish, little one?" asked the baron. "I cannot understand what all this talk means. No, Christiane has not sent for me. I am bringing sad news to my children, but I have received none from them."

"Were you bringing news of a death," rejoined Gretchen, "it would seem as nothing compared with what I have to tell you. Because better certain death than possible dishonour!"

"Dishonour! Indeed! what do you mean?" exclaimed the baron, impressed, despite himself, at the peremptory and convincing way in which Gretchen spoke.

"Listen," said Gretchen; "in a carriage it will take you a quarter of an hour to reach the castle. Come with me on foot along this short cut and you will be there in ten minutes. And, on the way, I will tell you those secrets which my conscience would like to keep to itself. But the memory of the pastor who saved my mother impels me to save his daughter. Herr von Eberbach must not break his head against the walls of that cursed castle; Madame Christiane must not run mad like poor Gretchen; the child, nursling of my goat, must not be left an orphan in a cruel world. So come, and I will speak."

"I will be with you in a moment, Gretchen," said the baron, seized, in spite of himself, with fear.

He stepped out of the carriage, told the postillion to drive on to the castle and wait there for him, and, with a still quick and youthful step, accompanied Gretchen along the path indicated.

"I will tell you my story as we walk along," said Gretchen, "first of all because you are in a hurry, and then because, in this way, no tree and no bush in my forest will hear my story of shame in its entirety."

She shook in all her limbs.

"Be calm, my child," the baron said kindly, "and speak fearlessly to an old friend, to a father."

"Yes, you are a father," said Gretchen, "and you will help me in my trouble. You know, I believe, sir, of the terrible threats which that reprobate, that hater, that Samuel Gelb, since I must pronounce his name, used against Madame Christiane and me."

"I heard about it, yes, Gretchen. My God! is it Samuel again? Speak, speak, my child."

"Sir," resumed Gretchen, hiding her face in her hands. "Samuel Gelb, as you know, swore that we both should love him, or, at least, that we should be his. "Well! . . . . well! he has already been as good as his word so far as I am concerned."

"What! Gretchen! you love him?"

"Oh! I hate him!" Gretchen exclaimed with fierce energy. "But there came a day, there came an hour, when he succeeded, but too well, in compelling me, the instrument of hell . . . . I do not know if it is to love him . . . . but, in short, may my mother forgive me! I am his!"

"Is it possible, Gretchen! Gretchen! Are you in your right mind?"

"Oh! if only I were not! But, unfortunately, sir, it is true, true as my conscience, true as my memory. There is only one thing upon which I am in doubt. You, sir, are learned. Enlighten my poor clouded mind. I seem to speak only of myself, but it is for the sake of your son's wife that I speak. So be frank with me as I am with you. Sir, can it be that the God of gentleness and mercy has left, within reach of the wicked, weapons and means against the good, from which the good cannot escape? Are there infernal forces which can compel an honest and innocent soul to sin? Are there insurmountable powers of magic which lead us to stain even that which is pure, and to possess even that which we abhor?"

"Explain yourself, my child."

"Sir," Gretchen went on, "examine this small phial which I found one evening on the floor of my hut."

Baron von Hermelinfeld took the platinum phial that Gretchen held out to him, uncorked it, then smelt it.

"Good God!" he cried, "have you then drunk any of this potion?"

"When I loved Samuel despite my hatred of him, sir, I noticed on the previous evening, and on that very day, the smell of this phial on my bread and in my milk."

"Oh! the unfortunate girl! Oh! the villain!" cried the baron."

"Well! what do you say, sir?"

"I say, my poor child, that your will has been coerced, drugged, blinded. I say that the crime has been double for him and null for you. I say that you are innocent notwithstanding your error, and pure notwithstanding your defilement."

"Oh! thank God!" exclaimed Gretchen, clasping her hands together with an expression of radiant joy. "Dear mother, then I have not been false to my vow. Blest be God, in heaven! and blest may you be, sir, on earth!"

But all of a sudden she went on, discouraged.

"For all that, there are some terrible mysteries. The soul is spotless, but the body is no longer so. And although I am white within, none the less am I sullied."

"Be consoled, be comforted, poor little one! The angels are not purer than you. I repeat, this villain has done all, and you need not complete the sad story, I guess the rest. He forced his way into your hut during the night, like a scoundrel. He took advantage of the solitude, and of your confidence, the coward. Oh! but we will punish him, never fear."

Gretchen raised her head, sad and proud, as if to shake off her depression.

"Let us not think any more of me," she said, "but of your daughter."

"Christiane is, thank God, less exposed than you, poor child," rejoined the baron. "Christiane does not live alone, in an open hut, but in a castle enclosed by high walls and surrounded by devoted servants whom she can summon to her aid and who are able to defend her, should her husband be absent."

"Is that what you think?" said Gretchen with a bitter smile. "Does not Samuel Gelb open every door of the castle that opens with a key, and even every door that opens without a lock?"

"What! Gretchen, so far as you know, has Samuel Gelb ever been inside the castle?"

"And how could he who built it, never have been inside it?"

"He who built it?" the baron repeated in amazement.

"I may tell you everything now," resumed Gretchen. "His crime has freed me from my oath, and my little roe, on which the monster was to be revenged, died a month ago. Already we are in sight of the Castle. Listen attentively, sir."

And she related how Samuel had constructed the double Castle.

"Oh! what daring!" exclaimed the baron. "And is Christiane not aware of all this?"

"She knows all, but she swore secrecy to me."

"What matter!" said the baron, "considering the danger she runs, why has she not written to me, according to her promise? Thank you again, Gretchen, thank you for confiding in me. I may keep this phial, may I not? and the villain is in my power, I hope."

"If he is in your power, do not let him escape!" said Gretchen, her eyes flashing with anger. "Oh! how I hate him! What a blessing I have the right to hate him! I live only for the day when I shall see him punished, and punished he will be, if not by you, by God."

She resumed:

"We are at the postern of the Castle, sir, and I must go back to my goats. I have done my duty, it is for you to act."

"Adieu, Gretchen," said the baron, "I thought only an unfortunate event called me to the Castle, but I find a danger summoned me as well, I have now two reasons for making haste. Adieu."

He walked with rapid strides towards the Castle.

The first servant he met informed him that Julius had gone out two hours ago; after dinner, he had taken his gun, and intended to be out shooting until evening. But Madame von Eberbach was at the Castle.

The baron displayed the liveliest annoyance. He walked straight to Christiane's apartments, refusing to be announced.

When, after knocking, he entered into Christiane's room, he found her absorbed in that occupation, so interesting to mothers, of cooing to her baby.

Christiane gave a cry of surprise on recognising her father-in-law and advanced eagerly towards him.

The baron embraced her tenderly. Then he lavished caresses on his grandson, who he thought looked bonny and well.

"Yes, he is a fine boy, is he not, my Wilhelm?" said Christiane. "There are not, I think, many children as beautiful. Would you believe that he already understands when I speak to him! Oh! I love him! Come, now, smile at your grandfather, you ugly little rosebud of a face."

"He is charming, my dear daughter, he resembles you," said the baron. "But send him to his nurse. I must have a serious talk with you, and I am afraid of a distraction such as that. So Julius is in the forest?" he asked.

"Yes, he is out shooting."

"Does any one know where? Can he be found?"

"We can, at least, try," said Christiane.

"Well, I should be glad if you would. I have serious, urgent matters to discuss with him."

Christiane rang, and gave orders that three of the servants should search the wood each in a different direction, and request Julius to return.

"But whatever is the matter?" she asked the baron anxiously.

"Nothing," replied the uneasy baron. "At least, Julius is the one to whom I must speak about it. So we will discuss the matter when he returns. Meanwhile, tell me about yourself. You have not written to me?"

"But I have, my dear father," Christiane said.

"Ah! yes, a few loving words at the end of Julius' letters. But I mean no letters have passed between you and me."

"Excuse me, father, I wrote you two and half months ago, a long and urgent letter of a private nature."

"Well! nothing of the kind has reached me," said the baron in surprise. "But, wait a moment. Yes, two or three months ago, it is true, I received an envelope bearing the Heidelberg postmark, but containing only a blank sheet of paper. I mentioned it in one of my letters to Julius, but he replied that he did not understand what I meant."

"I am quite certain of having put the letter into the envelope," Christiane said. "I can see myself now at that bureau, writing it and sealing it. My God! could he have come and taken it away?"

"Who?" quickly asked the baron.

"He who was the subject of my letter to you."

"Samuel Gelb?"

"Yes, Samuel Gelb, father."

There was a moment's silence. Christiane, dismayed, pondered over this fresh insolence on Samuel's part.

The baron studied his daughter-in-law.

"Have you then seen this Samuel again," he asked.

"Alas! yes, twice."

"Here!" resumed the Baron.

"No, outside," Christiane replied after a moment's hesitation.

She remembered that the baron had particularly forbidden Julius to receive Samuel, and she told a lie to screen Julius.

"And what did Samuel say to you?" the Baron went on.

"The first time he repeated his insolent threats."

"The villain!"

"It was on that I wrote to you, father, asking your help, begging you to come to me. The second time that I saw him, was eight or ten days later, at a play in public."

And Christiane told the baron of the emigration of the students and the representation of the *Robbers*. She laid all the blame on her woman's curiosity; it was she who wanted to be present at the entertainment and who induced Julius to go to it. Julius yielded out of deference to his wife. Besides, Samuel, with whom she exchanged a few words after the play, swore that he would not re-appear before her until she herself summoned him. And, of course, that she would never do. The students returned to Heidelberg on the following day.

"For the last two months," Christiane added, "Monsieur Samuel has scrupulously kept his word. Therefore, surprised at receiving no reply from you, I have not written you again. During these two months, neither the sight, nor the remembrance, nor even the name of this man has troubled my happiness. For, in reality, I have never been happier nor more quiet than I am now. Wilhelm has not had the least recurrence of his indisposition, nor does Julius feel any return of that languor which our secluded life at first cast over him, after the excitement and noise to which he had been accustomed. In fact," Christiane continued smiling, "the father and the child are quite cured. And, I, who live only in them, and am half Wilhelm, half Julius, the love of Julius and the health of Wilhelm make my happiness complete. I thank God every day of my life, and I wish for no other paradise than my present made eternal."

"And Gretchen?" said the baron suddenly.

Christiane shuddered.

"Gretchen!" she answered, sad and pensive; "Gretchen shows herself to no one now. She used to be shy, now she has become wild, savage, unapproachable. All intercourse with human beings seems so unbearable to her that, in order to avoid bringing the goat that feeds Wilhelm to the castle, she no longer takes him along with her flock. The goat remains at the castle and the servants look after it. The people of Landeck who have had occasion to exchange a few words with Gretchen, say that her mind appears to be unhinged. As to myself, I have been five or six times to her hut to try to see her, but in vain did I knock and call, Gretchen never answered. I have often seen her in the distance when I go out with Wilhelm. But the moment she perceives me she flies into the depths of the forest."

"That's strange!" said the baron, "now I have been at Eberbach but half an hour, and Gretchen has been the first to accost me and has spoken to me at great length."

"And what has she told you?"

"Everything. Samuel's crime, his plans, his indiscretion. He has built this castle; he can come into it whenever he likes, and it is not outside, it is here, Christiane, that he has seen you."

"Well! father?"

"Well! you have not told me the whole truth, Christiane."

A smile of sad dignity flitted across Christiane's lips. But she did not vindicate herself.

The Baron got up, a prey to some violent emotion, and strode up and down the room.

"I will see Samuel," said he, "and have a talk with him. Let him beware. This time, I will not confine myself to words. As soon as I have spoken to Julius, I will set off, and this very night, I shall be at Heidelberg."

"Excuse me, father," said Christiane, "but I implore you to reflect before you do that. I have already told you that for the last two months this man has left us in peace. Is it prudent to excite and rouse him? I admit to you that I am afraid, as afraid as if you spoke of striking a sleeping tiger."

"Then have you any particular reasons, Christiane, for taking exception to this step?"

Christiane coloured, feeling insulted at his tone.

"Men," said she as if to herself, "with their strange suspicions, do not understand the modesty of a woman, nor do they know that the more quiet the lake, the more easily a breath will ruffle it. If you want to see Samuel Gelb, sir, you need not go to Heidelberg, nor wait until this evening for that."

"What do you mean?" said the baron.

Christiane went direct to the panel Samuel had indicated to her, and placed her finger on the button.

CHAPTER LVI

THE DAY OF RECKONING IS SURE TO COME

"WHAT are you going to do, Christiane?" cried the Baron.

"Have I not told you, father," Christiane replied, "that Samuel Gelb swore never to appear before me again unless I should summon him by this signal. Well! since you are desirous of seeing him, I am sending for him, that is all."

And, trembling with both fear and pride, she pressed the button.

The button yielded, then rebounded all of a sudden before she had time to remove her finger. The shock sent a thrill through her, and she drew back pale and startled, as if Samuel were about to appear suddenly.

She looked round the wainscoting in fear and trembling, not knowing where Samuel might spring from. It seemed to her that he emerged from all sides at once; she felt hemmed in by this invisible enemy, and fancied that she heard thousands of footsteps behind the oak panelling.

Notwithstanding, the wall remained motionless and silent.

"No one comes," said the baron, after two or three moments' silence.

"Wait yet awhile!" Christiane replied.

And she sat down, quivering with fear, her gaze always fixed on the wainscot. But a quarter of an hour passed, and the panel did not move.

"Christiane, you have been dreaming or this man has lied to you," said the baron.

Then Christiane rose, radiant, and drew a long breath of relief.

"Ah! you are right, my father!" she exclaimed. "How foolish of me to have been afraid. How foolish of me to have believed that Samuel was going to appear from behind the panel. No, he will not come. He told me that to strike my imagination, to make me believe that he was always near, unknown to me, that I might feel his presence whatever I was doing, that I might be compelled to think of him always. He calculated on my never attempting to push the spring. By sheer chance I have pushed it, and this has revealed the falsehood. Oh my God! I thank Thee! How grateful I am, father, that you drove me to this act of daring."

Her outburst of joy was so spontaneous, so sincere that instantly the baron felt touched and convinced.

"You are a pure and loyal creature, my child," he said, taking her hands in his. "If, without wishing it, I have offended you, forgive me."

"Oh! father! father! . . . ." said Christiane.

Just then the servants whom Christiane had sent in search of Julius, returned to say that they had scoured the wood and called in vain.

"At what time does Julius usually return from shooting?" asked the baron.

"At about six o'clock in the evening," replied Christiane.

"Yet two or three hours to wait!" said the baron. "Why, it's a day lost . . . . How very annoying . . . . but we must make the best of it. My dear child, will you let me have some writing materials? When Julius returns, let me be at once informed."

Christiane installed her father-in-law in Julius' library, and left him writing.

At dusk, Julius had not yet come back, and the baron returned to the drawing-room, where he found Christiane.

He had scarcely been in the room a moment before she suddenly uttered a cry.

One of the panels had moved and opened slowly, giving admittance to Samuel Gelb.

At first Samuel saw only Christiane's white dress, and did not distinguish the baron sitting in the shadow.

He advanced towards Christiane, to whom he bowed with his graceful and cold politeness.

"Forgive me, madame," said he, "for not coming sooner in answer to your call. I have undoubtedly delayed a long time, hours, or even perhaps a day. The reason is that I was at Heidelberg. On my return to Landeck, the position of the bell warned me that you had rung, and I hasten to you. In what may I have the happiness of serving you? But first, let me thank you for having sent for me."

"It is not Christiane who has sent for you; it is I, sir," said the baron rising.

Samuel could not help starting at this, so to speak, physical surprise; but his powerful will regained, almost at once, the ascendancy.

"The Baron von Hermelinfeld!" he exclaimed. "A pleasant surprise. Good evening, sir!"

Then turning to Christiane:

"Ah! is that the game you are playing with me, madame?" he continued, with his bitter smile and ironical air of former times. "Ah! it's a trap! Very well! be it so! and we shall see which will be caught in it, the wolf or the hunter."

"Do you dare still to use your threats?" cried the baron, indignant.

"Why not?" Samuel replied quietly. "Have I, in your opinion, lost any advantage because I present myself here in such perfect good faith? I think, between ourselves, the contrary."

"Indeed?" said the baron with a sneer.

"That's obvious," rejoined Samuel. "First of all, a man against a woman! I might have appeared to be abusing my strength against her weakness; but you are two against me to-day. In the second place it seems to me that I was leaving madame entirely alone, I was not provoking her, nor was I attacking her. Is it she or I who breaks the truce? Who recommences the war? Henceforth I am released, I believe, from all scruples. Now the game is in my hands, and I thank you for beginning the attack."

Christiane looked at the baron with a glance which meant: "What did I tell you?"

"This being understood," Samuel went on, "I repeat to you, sir, what I said to madame: What do you want of me?"

"I want to give you a little useful advice, sir," replied the baron, severe and menacing. "I have, so far, employed tolerance and persuasion with regard to you. That has never succeeded well. Now I no longer entreat, I command."

"Ah!" said Samuel. "And what do you command? And why should you command me?"

"Do you recognise this, sir?" asked the baron, showing Samuel the platinum phial which Gretchen had given him.

"That phial!" said Samuel. "Do I recognise it? Yes or no. I cannot say; it's possible."

"Sir," rejoined the baron, "my duty would, no doubt, be to denounce you this very day to justice. You understand what is the consideration which still makes me hesitate. But if you do not free my daughter for ever from your monstrous threats, if you move one step or say one syllable against her, if you do not make every effort to disappear from her life and from her mind, I swear before God that I will turn a deaf ear to pity, and that I will make use of the horrible secret that I know. You do not believe in divine justice; but I will in truth compel you to believe in human justice!"

Samuel folded his arms and sneered openly.

"Ah! bah!" said he. "You would do that? Well! by the devil, I wish you would for the curiosity of it. Ah! you would speak? And so would I speak. Do you suppose that I have nothing to say? On my faith! the dialogue between accuser and accused promises to be somewhat unedifying. I have several things on my mind, do you understand? Accuse me, I shall deny nothing, I'll warrant you. On the contrary."

"Good Heavens! What abominable cynicism!" cried the baron, thunderstruck.

"Not at all, nothing more simple," said Samuel. "You attack me, I defend myself. Is it my fault now if the contest between us is not equal? Is it my fault if you have all and I nothing to lose? Is it my fault if I risk neither name, nor family, nor fortune, nor reputation, nor rank, and if you stand to lose all that? You want there to be a duel between us? Is it my fault if you present an enormous surface, and if I am thin as the blade of a razor? And what can I say except 'Sir, fire first.'"

Baron von Hermelinfeld was for a moment dumfounded at such unparalleled audacity. But, rousing himself from his amazement, he said:

"Very well, be it so; even in these terms, I accept your challenge, and we shall see in whose favour justice and society will decide."

"Justice! society!" retorted Samuel. "But I shall say to them, sir, what I say to you. You attacked me first, oppressed me first. Is it my fault? Do I belong to that society which proscribes me? What do I owe to that justice which forsakes me? I am not a legitimate son, a presumptive heir, the virtuous descendant of a virtuous father, a child according to law and to religion; in my veins there does not run honest blood licensed by the law; I am not Julius. No! I am Samuel, curse you! a bastard, a love-child, the son of an idle whim, the inheritor of vice, and I have in my veins only the scum and the dregs of my father's blood. Julius may represent the integrity, the authority, the virtue of his official father; I represent the passion, the rebellion, the licentiousness of my unknown father. 'Qualis pater, talis filius?' it is a rudimentary rule. The court will judge. Call my conduct by what name you will. Say that I have committed a crime. Very well. I am glad to have the opportunity of letting the judges choose between him who has committed the crime and him who has made the criminal!"

The baron was white with surprise and anger. Christiane was shaking with fear. Baron von Hermelinfeld resumed:

"Let me tell you once more, sir, you are not being attacked. By consent of your first victim you are spared, on condition that you do not attempt to make a second. But should you even appear again before my daughter, whatever the consequences, I denounce you. The judges will decide, if you wish, in favour of your theories, I doubt if they will decide in favour of your crime. The living witness is there: Gretchen; the palpable proof is there: this phial. What will the accused be able to reply?"

"Good!" Samuel said with a laugh, "he will still be obliged to turn accuser, that's all. I shall apply the law of retaliation. Had I committed a crime of a different nature, a theft or a murder, I could understand the assurance of my informers, and I might tremble or flee. But, in this case, what is it all about? The seduction of a young girl. Why! my mother was seduced too. I have letters which prove her resistance and the culpable perseverance of her seducer. Is the dead witness less sacred than the living one, sir? As regards this phial, you say it is a proof against me, very well; but it is a proof against the other too. I shall say, no need that it be true, I shall say that I discovered the clever and terrible nature of this potion by analysing a similar phial lost at my mother's——"

"Oh! it is an infamous slander," cried the baron.

"Who has told you so and who will prove it?" retorted Samuel. "Now do you understand my methods of defence, Herr von Hermelinfeld? I am not a criminal, I am an avenger. My counsel? that will simply be my address to the court."

He was silent. The baron, thoroughly overcome, his hands trembling, his white hairs damp with an icy sweat, maintained a stupefied silence. Samuel went on triumphantly:

"Sir, I await your summons to appear. Madame von Eberbach, I await the sound of your bell. I wish you both '*au revoir*.'"

And, conveying a threat into the words "au revoir," he went out, not by the secret exit, but by the door of the room, which he slammed violently after him.

"Samuel!" cried the Baron.

But he was already out of hearing.

"Oh! my child!" said the baron to Christiane, who, mute with terror, clung to his breast, "this Samuel is a fatal man. It is impossible for me to attack him, as you see, but I shall know how to defend you. You must beware of him, never stay alone, have someone always with you, in fact, leave this castle or have it carefully explored and rebuilt. Don't be anxious, I am here to watch over you."

A footstep was heard in the corridor.

"Ah! that's Julius' step," exclaimed Christiane reassured.

The next moment Julius entered.

CHAPTER LVII

WIFE AND MOTHER

"MY dear father," said Julius, after affectionate greetings had passed between them, "you have been waiting for me several hours, so I am told, and the servants searched all over the forest. They did not find me, for the very good reason that I was not there. Dear me, as usual I went off with my gun over my shoulder, and the only thing I made use of was a book which I had in my pocket. A mile away from here, I sat down on the grass, and read Klopstock till dusk. With me the dreamer invariably gets the better of the sportsman. But had you anything very important to tell me?"

"Alas! yes, Julius."

"What is it? You appear thoughtful and sad."

The baron glanced at Christiane and seemed to hesitate.

"Am I in the way?" Christiane said quickly. "I shall leave you two alone."

"No, remain here, my daughter. You have firmness and resolution, have you not?"

"You alarm me," said Christiane. "Oh! I had a presentiment of some misfortune."

"It is necessary," pursued the baron, "that you should know what brings me here; because I depend upon you to persuade Julius to do what I came to ask of him."

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Julius. The baron handed him a letter.

"Read this aloud!" said he.

"It is a letter from Uncle Fritz," said Julius. And he read out the following letter, not without breaking off more than once through his emotion:—

"New York,
"25th August, 1811.

"MY DEAREST BROTHER,

"It is a dying man who writes to you. The victim of a disease which never spares, I shall not rise from this bed to which I have been confined for two months, but to rest in my grave. I have yet three months to live. My doctor, who is one of my friends, and knows my stamp of character, has yielded to my urgent entreaty, and told me the truth.

"You understand me too, and you know perfectly well that if this news has affected me painfully, it is not from mean fear of death or cowardly regret of life. I have lived long enough, since I have succeeded, by dint of assiduity, work and economy, in amassing a fortune that will contribute to your happiness and to that of my beloved nephew. But I had hoped to see a little of this happiness before dying. I wanted to realise my possessions, bring the proceeds over to you in Europe and say, 'Be happy!' That was the reward I had promised myself for so much toil. It seemed that God owed me that at least. God has decided otherwise, His will be done.

"So I shall never see my country again. I shall never look again upon those whom I love best in the world. A stranger will close my eyes. I do not say this that you should come, you and your son, or perhaps one of the two. You are prevented by duty; he, by happiness. I do not send for you. Besides, you would have to start at once on receipt of this. There would be just time for you to get here, and what a world of trouble only to see me die immediately. You would waste three months to give me one day.

"Do not come. Ah! and yet I would have died less sadly, had your looks of affection gladdened the last hours of an existence shortened in working for you. I would also have wished to feel there was someone trustworthy, to whom I could give my instructions as to business and the possessions which I leave. But it was foretold that I would die in exile and alone.

"Farewell, it is this thought which takes away my courage. To you my last thoughts, to you my whole fortune. Why did I leave you? But I do not repent, since I am able to bequeath a little of this world's goods to you. Above all, do not imagine that I urge you to come.

"I embrace you both tenderly.
"Your dying brother,
"FRITZ VON HERMELINFELD."

"Father," said Julius, wiping away a tear, "at your age and in your position, you cannot undertake a long journey. I will go instead."

"Thank you, my son," said the baron. "That is what I came to ask you to do. But what does Christiane say?"

Christiane, deathly pale, had sunk into a chair.

"May I not accompany Julius?" she asked.

"Of course" said Julius, "I shall take you with me."

"But Wilhelm," said the mother.

"Oh! it's true," Julius rejoined.

"It is impossible," said the Baron, "to expose the child to such a long voyage. Wilhelm has been improving for some time, but he still seems delicate! How would he stand the sea and change of climate? If Christiane goes, she must leave him with me."

"Leave my child!" exclaimed Christiane. And she burst into tears.

Let her husband go without her, that was impossible, but go without her child, that was even more impossible.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE EVE OF DEPARTURE

THE Baron von Hermelinfeld tried to interpose in Christiane's perplexity.

"The wisest thing," he said gently, "would be that Julius should go alone to New York. After all, it would not be a separation for any great length of time. Unfortunately, my poor brother will not detain him there long. Julius will arrive in time to close his eyes, and will be able to return immediately. I know, my children, how sad even the shortest absence will be, but we have to take the exigencies of life as they present themselves, and you, Julius, must think of your uncle; you Christiane, of your son."

Christiane threw herself into her husband's arms.

"Is it then absolutely necessary that he should go?" she said.

"Put the question to your own noble heart," replied the baron. "It is the more necessary for Julius to go in that by remaining he would lose nothing. My poor brother sent me, by the same mail as this letter, a copy of his will. Whether Julius goes or stays, the entire fortune of Fritz comes to us. My brother did not wish us to attend his death bed from interested motives, and he has generously left us free to act as we thought best. But does not the very fact of his generosity make it the more incumbent upon us to go to him? I leave you to judge, my dear distressed one. For myself, I consider it so imperative a duty not to let Fritz die alone, that if Julius remains, I must go."

"Oh! I mean to go," Julius said.

"Yes, he must go," said Christiane, "but I will accompany him."

She went quickly up to the baron and added in a low voice:

"In that way, not only shall I be with Julius, but I shall escape Samuel."

"I could not have the heart to blame you," the baron rejoined aloud. "Your first journey met with very little success, so far as what you dread is concerned. But it is useless to argue with those who love. And if you absolutely wish to accompany Julius, I will undertake to take charge of Wilhelm, and try to replace you as a mother."

"Oh!" Christiane said, shaking her head, "a mother cannot be replaced. Oh God! if my Wilhelm were to fall ill when I was away; if he were to die! You are right, my father, not only as regards those that hate me, but also those I love; I took a journey once before, and on my return, found that my father had gone to his long rest; if, on my return this time, I were to find my child's grave! No, let Julius go, since he must; I shall remain to look after my boy."

"Christiane," said Julius, "you are both wise and loving; remain with our Wilhelm, that is my advice too. Our separation will be cruel pain. But you without your child, your child without you, that would be hardest of all. I am a man, and if the parting is pain to me, well, I shall be back in three or four months, and your kisses will make me forget the pain. But our baby, if he is ill, and you are not there to save him, all will be over, and all your tears on your return would avail nothing. You are yet more necessary to him than to me."

He went on instantly as if to end all further discussion:

"When must I leave, father?"

"Alas! I am sorry to give you so little time," said the baron, "but you would have to leave this very evening."

"Oh! but that's utterly impossible!" exclaimed Christiane.

"Come, be calm, my child," went on the baron. "Since Julius has to go, is it not far better to cut short this sad time of parting? The sooner he goes, the sooner will he return. Besides, my poor brother cannot wait, and if Julius does not arrive in time to be with him at the last, of what use for him to go at all? I have made all enquiries as to the departure of the boats. There is the 'Commerce' which leaves Ostend in two days. After that, it would be necessary to wait a fortnight. That would be too late. Besides, the 'Commerce' is a safe and quick boat. It would be unwise to miss this opportunity. Think, my dear Christiane, what a comfort it will be to us to feel that Julius is on a good ship. The 'Commerce' is the fastest boat and the most sea-worthy sailing from Ostend. I am certain that Julius will arrive in time, and you will be equally certain that he will return."

"Oh! my father," said Christiane, "it is only that I cannot bear the thought of his having to leave me so hurriedly! Can you not give me a day or two in which to accustom myself to the idea?"

Julius interposed with the question:

"When does the 'Commerce' sail, father?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"At what time?"

"At eight o'clock in the evening."

"Well! father, by paying the postillion double, it does not take more than thirty-six hours to get to Ostend. I have forty-eight hours before me. I understand all your reasons; I must sail by the 'Commerce' in order to be certain of finding my uncle still alive; but I do not wish to rob my darling Christiane of a single moment that belongs to her, I shall leave to-morrow morning."

"And I will go with you as far as Ostend," Christiane added.

"We will see about that," said Julius.

"No, I want it to be decided at once."

"Very well, we will arrange it so!" said Julius, glancing at his father.

The matter was decided thus. Christiane left Julius and the baron a few moments, to hasten on the preparations for her husband's journey.

Father and son exchanged a few words in an undertone.

Christiane returned almost immediately. She had given her orders, and wanted to make the most of the few hours remaining to her.

The evening passed sadly yet pleasantly. Nothing is more painful and yet more sweet than these partings. It is at such times that we realize how greatly we love! Everything that comes to an end has a kind of bitter, poignant charm, which we do not experience in the plenitude of settled and permanent affections. Anguish of heart reveals of what nature are the ties which bind us one to the other. We measure past happiness by present misery; for there is no surer thermometer of love than pain.

The baron retired early in order to rest from his fatigue of the day, and prepare for his journey on the morrow.

Christiane and Julius remained together weeping, and consoling each other, gazing at their child in his cradle, repeating how unhappy they would be without the other, how neither must fret overmuch, and promising never to forget each other. Then, each one tried to smile in order to convince the other that he would not be too miserable, and that this journey was not so great a misfortune after all. But this fictitious smile soon belied itself, and the burst of laughter ended in sobs.

Meanwhile night was advancing. They were in Christiane's room.

"It is late," she said; "you need to rest for the fatigue which lies before you. Go to your own room, my dear Julius, and try to sleep."

"Do you send me away?" Julius said with a smile. "When we are about to be parted for many nights to come, you send me away?"

"Oh! my beloved!" cried Christiane, pressing her lips to his. "I love you!"

. . . . .

When the dawn crept stealthily into the room, Christiane lay in a deep slumber. She was worn out by the emotions she had gone through. One lovely arm hung out of bed, the other, bent under her head, supported her weary brow. Her whole attitude, the black circle round her eyes, the repose of her delicate limbs, betrayed the exhaustion of a body vanquished by too much soul. From time to time, a shadow passed across her forehead, a spasm contracted her sweet face like the expression of some bad dream, and her fingers twitched nervously.

She was alone.

Suddenly she opened her eyes wide, sat up in bed and looked round the room.

"How strange!" she said, "I fancied Julius was there."

Then, hastily jumping out of bed, she ran to Julius' room.

The room was empty.

She pulled the bell violently. Her maid hastened to reply.

"My husband!" she cried, "where is my husband?"

"He is gone, Madame."

"Gone, without bidding me good-bye! impossible!"

"He bade me tell you that he had left a letter for you."

"Where is it?"

"On the mantel-piece in your bedroom."

Christiane rushed to her room.

On the chimney-piece were two letters, one from Julius, the other from the baron.

Julius explained to Christiane that he had wished to spare her the agony of a last farewell. He had been afraid that he would not have the courage to go, if he saw her again sobbing and in despair as on the previous evening. He begged her to take courage; she would not be alone, since she would be with her child. He had to make the best of it, he, who at one stroke, was leaving both wife and child.

Long after Christiane had read the last word of this letter, she remained looking at it, motionless, rigid, petrified, without a tear.

The maid took little Wilhelm out of his cradle and placed him in his mother's arms.

"Ah! there you are," she said, without seeming to notice the child.

And she gave him back to the maid.

"And his father, what does he tell me?"

She read the baron's letter.

"My dear Daughter,

"Forgive me for having taken your husband away so suddenly. Why prolong heart-breaking farewells? Do not be anxious about Julius. I am going with him as far as Ostend, and shall wait to see him off. As soon as the ship has left the harbour, I will return to you at full speed. So in three days, you will have news of your husband. It is in order to afford you this consolation that I accompany him. And yet I have been questioning, this whole night, whether it were not wiser for me to stay here with you, to protect you against the odious threats of which you know. But, on the other hand, we must not carry our fears to the length of exaggeration and childishness. By taking, during these seventy-two hours that you are going to be alone, every precaution which human prudence can devise, I cannot see that there is any danger to fear. Have someone always with you, make up your mind never to go out of the castle, and at night, have armed servants to sleep in the drawing-room and in the library, and lock yourself into your own room with your maid and Wilhelm's nurse. By these means, what need you dread?

"In three days, I shall be with you. My duties call me back to Berlin; I will take you with me. Employ these three days in making your preparations. I have, as you know, at the gates of Berlin, a house with a garden, where our Wilhelm can live in the open air and my Christiane be in safety. You will both remain with me while Julius is away.

"Till Thursday, then. Be brave, then, and kiss your Julius on the cheeks of Wilhelm.

"Your devoted father,

"Baron von Hermelinfeld."

This letter did Christiane good. The thought that Julius had some one who would accompany him, and bring her news in three days, gave her fresh courage. Julius had not wholly gone from her so long as they were kept in touch through the baron.

She went to Wilhelm's cot, took up her child and embraced him with tears.

But suddenly a sinister idea flashed across her mind. She remembered the prophecy of Gretchen's flowers at the ruins.

"Yes," she murmured, "Gretchen foretold it, the union ends almost at once; we live and we love one another, and yet we are parted. And Gretchen added that the separation would last for long years, and that we should live far from each other, like two strangers. Oh! my God! preserve me against these superstitious fears."

And with the thought of Gretchen came the remembrance of Samuel.

"Oh!" she cried in terror, "he who ought to protect me, goes away, and he who wants to ruin me, stays."

She strained Wilhelm to her breast as if to shelter the purity of the mother behind the innocence of the child, and threw herself on her knees before the crucifix that hung over the cradle.

"Thou, God!" she cried, "have pity on a poor woman who loves and who is hated. Thou alone canst restore my husband to me, and preserve his wife to him."

CHAPTER LIX

THE BELL RINGS

At about half-past eleven o'clock on the evening of that same day, the Three met in the deep circular hall where Samuel had presented Julius to the chiefs of the Tugendbund (Guild of Virtue.)

The Three, masked as usual, sat around the Hall which was lighted by the lamp suspended from the ceiling.

Samuel was standing before them, his face uncovered.

"So," Samuel was saying, "you do not wish me to act now?"

"No," replied the chief. "It is not from want of confidence in your ability and courage; but is not our principal reason the actual position of our enemy? Most certainly Napoleon's star is just now in the ascendant; everything favours him; he is more secure than ever on the throne of Europe. He already had dominion, the birth of the King of Rome has now ensured its continuance. At present God is assuredly with him."

"It is when at their zenith," interrupted Samuel, "that I like to oppose my enemies."

"We know that," replied the chief, "and we know too, that the serenity of the sky calls forth the thunder. But reflect on the consequences which would follow an attempt at this moment. The fact is nothing without the idea; action is useless, and consequently wrong, if it does not carry with it the conscience of the world. So, to strike Napoleon at a time of universal peace, when he attacks no one, when he threatens no one, would it not be to place general opinion on his side? Should we not be the aggressors, we who are on the contrary, the avengers and protectors of human liberty? Should the attempt fail, we strengthen his position; should it succeed, we strengthen his dynasty. You see the hour has not come."

"Very well! let us wait," said Samuel. "But if it is only peace that stands in your way, then you will not have long to wait, that I promise you. Napoleon cannot rest without being false to his principle, and without forswearing himself. He is war or he is nothing. They who reproach him with his insatiable thirst of conquest and territory, do not understand the first word of his mission. Napoleon is armed revolution. He must go from nation to nation, pouring French blood into the trenches and into the minds of the people, which will give an impetus everywhere to the growth of revolt and popular instinct. He remain in a gilded chair, like an idle king! He has not come to earth for that. He has not yet been round the world, do not imagine he intends to rest. Therefore the day, and I warn you that that day is not far off, on which Napoleon shall declare war against no matter what country, whether Prussia or Russia, the Tugendbund will give me permission to act."

"Perhaps. But do you remember Friedrich Staps?"

"I remember that he is dead, and that he is not avenged."

"Before authorising you to act," resumed the chief, "we must know what you intend to do?"

"I shall act independently of you, and will not compromise you. Will that satisfy you?"

"No," said the chief. "The Guild has the right to know everything. You cannot isolate yourself, and all the members are conjointly responsible."

"Very well!" said Samuel. "Listen!"

The three turned their attention to Samuel, and he was about to speak. . . .

Suddenly a metallic sound was heard.

Samuel started.

The same sound was repeated.

"What does this mean?" Samuel thought. "The baron and Julius have gone to Ostend. Christiane is alone. Is this journey a blind, and can they be setting a trap for me again?"

"Well! speak on," said the chief.

But Samuel gave no further thought to the three, no further thought to the Emperor, no further thought to anything. He thought only of Christiane.

"Did you not hear?" said he.

"Yes, something like the ring of a bell. What is the matter?"

"The matter is," Samuel answered without ceremony, "that we will continue this conversation later on. Excuse my leaving you, but I am wanted."

"Who wants you?" asked the chief.

"She does," he replied, unmindful whom he was addressing. But he corrected himself immediately.

"A little goat-herd," said he, "who warns me that there are spies in the environs. You have only time to fly."

"You will do nothing before seeing us again?" said the chief.

"Nothing," said Samuel, "don't be alarmed."

And he opened the door for them. As it closed after them, the bell rang again more urgently and like a cry of anguish.

"If it were a trap," said Samuel, "she would not summon me so violently and so persistently. What in the world has happened that she should send for me in the absence of her husband and of the baron? Let us see what she wants of me. Come, Samuel, be worthy of yourself. Be calm and composed! and don't be so ridiculously agitated like a school boy over his first passion."

And he hurriedly mounted the staircase, which led to Christiane's boudoir.

CHAPTER LX

FATE PLAYS INTO SAMUEL'S HANDS

THIS first day of the separation had been a sad one to Christiane. She had taken refuge in the only place where she could still find happiness, beside little Wilhelm. She had not left him the whole day long, rocking him, singing to him, kissing his golden curls, speaking to him as if he could understand.

"I have no one now but you, my Wilhelm. Oh! try to fill my life and my soul, I implore you. Take my thoughts into your tiny hands, and keep them there. Your father has left me, do you know that? Comfort me, my little one. Let us both smile. Smile at me first and I will try to smile afterwards."

And the child smiled and the mother wept.

Never had Wilhelm looked more beautiful, more fresh, more rosy. He took his eight or nine meals splendidly from his wild nurse. When night was come, Christiane put him to sleep in his cradle, drew the little curtains close to shade the light of the lamp from the child's eyes, fetched a book from the library and sat down to read.

But she could not fix her mind on her book; her thoughts were on the road to Ostend, flying after the galloping horses.

Julius must already be far away. Each turn of the wheels took him rapidly farther. At this present moment, even supposing Christiane wished to rejoin him before he embarked, to see him again, were it but for an instant, she could no longer do so. Already it seemed to her that the ocean lay between them.

There came to Christiane a sting of remorse. Why did she not, on waking in the morning, have the horses put in, and why did she not start off in pursuit of the fugitive? By doubling the postillion's pay, she would have overtaken her husband, and would have been able to give him a last embrace.

But alas! one embrace must always be the last!

Julius had done right in going away like this. What would have become of Wilhelm during her absence of three days. Ah! naughty, adored child. Always the child between the husband and the wife!

All these ideas passed through Christiane's mind in the vague, dreaming confusion which night lends to thought.

Suddenly Wilhelm awoke crying.

Christiane ran to the cradle.

The child whom she had left so smiling, so quiet, now lay with contracted features and bathed in a cold sweat. His head was heavy as lead, and his pulse beat quick and strong.

"Ah! dear me," exclaimed Christiane, "this is indeed the last straw; Wilhelm is ill."

To call, rush to the bell, take up her child, clasp him to her bosom as if to impart to him her breath, her health, her life, all this was, to the mother, but the work of a second.

But the child remained cold and inert. He no longer even cried. There was a perceptible wheeze each time he drew his breath. His throat was closing up.

The servants hurried into the room.

"Quick," cried Christiane, "to horse! a doctor! my child is dying. No matter which. Ten thousand florins to him who brings me a doctor! Go to Neckarsteinach, to Heidelberg, everywhere. But start away at once, I say. Oh! my God; my God!"

The men rushed out and Christiane remained with the women.

Christiane turned to the nurse.

"Come here," said she, "look at Wilhelm. You ought to understand children's ailments, or you are not a good nurse. What is the matter with him? Oh! not even to know what ails him. All mothers ought to study medicine. To think that the remedy is perhaps at hand, quite simple, ready prepared, that I would only have to give it to him and yet I do not know it. Oh! my very life, do not die, or I will die too. And his father, why has he gone? For money, for an uncle. What is that to me, an uncle and money. Ah! his uncle is ill? Well! his child is ill too! My child! my child! Now then, have you looked at him? What has he got?"

"Madame," said the nurse, "you excite him too mnch. He must be put back in his cradle."

"In his cradle, you said. There now he is in it. I obey you, but save him. It will not be much, will it? Oh! I entreat you, say that it will not be much."

The nurse shook her head.

"Alas! my dear good mistress, he has all the symptoms of the croup."

"The croup!" Christiane said. "What is that, the croup? If you know the disease, you know the remedy."

"Good gracious! madame, I had the misfortune to lose my first child from the croup."

"Lost him, did you say? Your child died of the croup? Then it is not the croup that Wilhelm has, if children die of it. Are you mad to quietly tell me such a thing; as if Wilhelm could die! And what was done to your child? . . . . But no, it's useless to tell me, since what was done made him die."

"Madame, he was bled."

"Even if it were right to bleed him, no one here knows how to bleed. Why ever don't people learn? but then, it might not perhaps be the right thing. We must have a doctor. Oh! those servants are not back yet."

And in a fever of anxiety she looked at the child whose breathing grew more and more difficult.

"They have not been gone ten minutes, madame," said one of the maids, "and it takes quite two hours to go to Neckarsteinach and back, galloping the whole way.

"Two hours," cried Christiane in despair, "why, it is an eternity. Oh! what a cruel and stupid thing is distance! Not a doctor in Landeck! Why did we come and bury ourselves here? Ah! the pastor . . . . . No, he knows nothing, nothing but how to pray. Well! that's always something. Let someone go and tell him to pray. Quick, send to him. And I too, in waiting for the doctor, I will try to pray."

She threw herself on her knees, made the sign of the cross and cried: "Oh God! oh God!"

Suddenly she rose. An idea had just crossed her mind.

"Yes," she said. "Gretchen! She understands plants and herbs. Let some one go for her. No, she would not come, I will go myself. You others, look after my child."

And with nothing over her head or shoulders, she flew down the staircase, rushed through the courtyards, climbed the rocks, and in a moment had reached the door of the hut.

"Gretchen! Gretchen!" she cried.

No answer.

"Now then! it is not a question today of your pretending to be either wild or mad. My child is dying, do you hear? That is more serious than anything. Gretchen, in the name of your mother, my child is dying. Help! help!"

"I am coming," replied Gretchen's voice.

A moment later, the door opened and Gretchen appeared on the threshold, gloomy and dejected.

"What do you want with me?" she said.

"Gretchen," Christiane replied, "my poor little Wilhelm, you know him? well! he is dying. You alone can save him. They say he has the croup. Do you know what it is? Have you any remedies for that? Yes, have you not? For if you had no remedies for the croup, of what use would your knowledge of herbs be?"

Gretchen smiled a bitter smile.

"Herbs? Of what use, indeed, is my knowledge of them? I believe in them no longer. They are all poisonous."

"Oh! come," said Christiane imploringly.

"Of what use?" Gretchen replied, without moving; "I tell you that the flowers have played me false."

"Gretchen, my dear Gretchen, summon up your devotion, your courage, your reason. In fact, what harm can it do you to try."

"You wish it?" said Gretchen; "very well, I will take some plants which my mother used to say were good for children's ailments. But my mother was mistaken. The plants have something else to do than to save children; they have to ruin women."

"I believe in the plants," said Christiane. "Be quick, take those you speak of, and hasten to the castle. Do not be long, my dear little one. I am going back to Wilhelm. I rely upon you."

She rushed away and returned to the cot. The child seemed slightly better. The pulse was quieter.

"Saved!" cried Christiane. "It was nothing; it was not the croup. Thank God!"

Gretchen entered at this moment.

"There is no need now," said Christiane.

"Wilhelm is quite well again."

"I think not," said Gretchen.

"You think not. Why?"

"I have thought it over in coming

along," Gretchen replied, in a solemn and convincing tone.

"The diseases which affect us now are not natural. They come from a man who bears us both a grudge. They last as long as he likes. He is the only one who can cure the invalid."

Christiane started.

"Are you speaking of Samuel?"

"Yes," said Gretchen. "And look now." She pointed to Wilhelm, whose face was again contracted with pain and his breathing laboured. The child's skin was dry, wrinkled and burning; his little limbs were growing rigid.

"Your herbs! Gretchen! your herbs!" cried Christiane, falling forward in her despair.

Gretchen shook her head with a dubious air. But, to satisfy the mother, she applied her herbs on the neck and on the breast of the child.

"Let us wait and see," she said. "But, I tell you again, it will have no effect."

Christiane waited, watching the effect of the plants on Wilhelm, trembling, breathless.

The same terrible symptoms continued.

"I warned you before," said Gretchen, shaking her head. "There is only one man who can save him."

"You are right!" exclaimed Christiane.

And she ran into the adjoining boudoir.

CHAPTER LXI

THE CROUP

GRETCHEN followed Christiane mechanically, not knowing what possessed her. She saw her place her finger on a projecting part of one of the wood panels.

"Madame, what are you doing?"

"I am calling him."

"Whom?"

"Why! the man who is able to save my child?"

"You are calling Samuel Gelb?" Gretchen faltered.

"Good Heavens! do you suppose I am going to let Wilhelm die?"

"He! but he is not the doctor, he is the executioner. Madame, you are invoking the devil."

"Well! have I not invoked God in vain! Ah! there is only one thing I am afraid of, and that is Wilhelm's illness. Everything sinks into nothingness beside the thought that Wilhelm may be dying. Oh! my God! if he were to be absent again? I would give my life for him to come quickly."

And she pressed on the spring with all her might.

"He will hear me this time," she said; "he is here, he will come in a moment Let us go back to Wilhelm."

She returned to her room with Gretchen.

"What is the time?" she asked the nurse.

"It must certainly be two hours since those men left."

"Alas! madame" said the nurse, "it is not yet half-an-hour ago."

There was no improvement in the child's condition.

Christiane ran back to the boudoir, rang a third time, then returned to the cradle.

Each second seemed to her an eternity. She could not keep still. Her blood boiled in her veins. She knelt beside the cot, then, rising, walked up and down the room, nervous, dishevelled, haggard, mistaking each sound for Samuel.

"Will he let my child die?" she said with numb despair.

She went back to the boudoir, and was again about to press the spring when the panel revolved sharply.

Samuel appeared.

At any other time, his appearance alone would have alarmed Christiane. With tightly compressed lips and unflinching gaze, he stood before her, grave, pale, cold, and as if armed with an inflexible resolve. It was no longer a reasoning being, it was no longer a heart, it was a will, a will rigid, inflexible, of iron, fatal, terrible and deadly.

But Christiane did not even glance at him. She flung herself at his feet.

"My child is dying, sir! save him," she cried.

"Ah!" said Samuel, "so it is not a trap."

"Oh!" Christiane replied, "there is no question of that! I crave your mercy. You are great, you will be kind. Forgive me the past. I was wrong. I kneel to you, I bless you. Come quickly. Save my little one!"

And she took his hand and drew him into the room.

"Look at him!" she said, "he is very ill, but you are so clever."

Samuel stooped over the cradle. But one glance was enough.

"That child has the croup," he said coldly.

"The croup! Ah! it is the croup!" exclaimed Christiane. "You, who know everything, tell me what must be done."

Samuel remained silent a moment, seemed to reflect, looked at Christiane who, breathless, waited, watched, for his first word, his first gesture.

"To begin with," he said slowly, "this room is too crowded. Every one must leave it."

"Leave the room, all of you," Christiane commanded.

The maids and the nurse obeyed.

On looking round to see if any one remained, Samuel perceived Gretchen crouching down in a corner trembling, scared, terrified at seeing Samuel, and unable to remove her eyes from him.

"Must she go out too?" Christiane asked.

"She above all," said Samuel.

"Go, Gretchen," Christiane ordered.

Without speaking a word, Gretchen retreated towards the door, her eyes still fixed on Samuel, as if to guard against some attack, a frown contracting her brow, fierce and menacing.

When she was almost out of the room:

"Madame! look to yourself!" she cried.

And hurriedly closing the door, she fled. Samuel and Christiane remained alone beside the cot.

CHAPTER LXII

A MOTHER'S TEMPTATION

"NOW then, sir, we are alone," Christiane said impatiently to Samuel. "Sir, what in the world are you thinking about?" For Samuel seemed absent-minded and absorbed in deep thought.

Most strange indeed! who could guess of what, at this supreme moment, Samuel was in reality thinking? Of an engraving of Albert Dürer's, celebrated in Germany, and entitled "The Violater." This picture represents the mysterious, grotesque figure of a man half-naked, hairy, muscular, who is drawing on to his knees a resisting and desperate woman, but he draws her with a force so powerful and so invincible, with a determination so unconcerned and so heedless, that at sight of the crime which seems to mingle murder with love, the impression of terror effaces all idea of voluptuousness, and that beneath the sinister symbol one imagines everything that is most cruel and pitiless in the world: Terror, Fatality, Death.

Yet this horrible picture was the subject of Samuel's thoughts beside the dying child's cradle, and Christiane was obliged to repeat:

"What are you thinking about, sir? Speak, act, in Heaven's name! I place my child in your hands. This terrible malady is not fatal, is it?"

"It can be cured, Madame," Samuel answered at last in a deep voice, "it can be cured, if taken in time."

"Oh! this attack is taken in time!" exclaimed Christiane. "It is not half-an-hour since the first symptoms broke out."

"There is yet time, Madame, it is true. But you have been wise not to delay. In half-an-hour it would have been too late."

"Well! why do you not begin at once."

"I am waiting—waiting for a word from you."

"A word from me? What word?"

Samuel was visibly agitated. No one but a mother anxious for her child would have failed to notice the ardent passionate look which flashed into his hitherto cold, scornful eyes, as he glanced round Christiane's room, which, at this hour, inspired thoughts of the mysteries which must have happened at times such as this, and at lovely Christiane with loosened hair, shoulders half-bare, eyes shining with emotion, whose woman's beauty was enhanced by her mother love.

"Listen, Madame," rejoined Samuel, as if making an unalterable decision. "You have, up to the present, set me at defiance, scorned me, worsted me. Now it is my turn. The seconds are numbered. I have not time to be other than brutal. You ask me for the life, the whole life of your child. Very well, I will give it you. But, in exchange, you will give me ten minutes of yours."

Christiane looked at him, without understanding.

"What do you mean?"

"I say that I propose an exchange," Samuel went on. "It lies with me to give you the being who is dearest to you in the whole world. You ask me to do that. It lies with you to give me the being who is dearest to me in the whole world; I ask that of you. And I repeat that I will give you a life and that you will give me ten minutes only. That is not yet plain enough? In a word, you love your child, and I—I love you!"

Christiane understood, for she gave a cry of horror.

"Ah! you understand at last?" said Samuel. "That is very fortunate!"

"Villain!" cried the young woman indignant, "such words! and at such a time!"

"I await your answer, and not insults," was Samuel's rejoinder.

"Not another word, wretch!" said Christiane, "for it seems to me that God will take my child from me that his innocence may not be witness of so gross an insult to his mother."

"Madame," Samuel rejoined, "since I have said that, you may be certain that I will not go from what I have said. Time is flying, and it is Wilhelm's life that you are wasting in words. My decision is irrevocable. I love you more than I myself imagined. While you hesitate the croup hesitates not. In five and twenty minutes it will be too late. Beware that you do not give yourself lifelong remorse through a mere scruple. I swear to you that you have to choose between two things alone: Give your child to the grave or yourself to me."

"Is it some bad dream?" Christiane said aloud to herself, "but no, I feel that it is only too true. Listen, sir," she continued entreatingly, "you are a sensible man. How is it possible for me to give myself as you suggest? Would you want me under such conditions? No, you have too much respect for me. You would scorn such a moral violation. There is nothing to wound you in what I have said. Even supposing that I loved you, how could I be yours when I belong to another. And to whom! Good God! remember to whom."

"Do not rouse the evil passions of Cain, Madame," muttered Samuel, resuming his threatening tone.

"Do you want my fortune? my whole fortune? Say but a word and it is yours. This is no empty phrase. Before God, before my father and mother who are in Heaven, I will get Julius. I do not know how, but I swear that I will succeed in getting him to share his fortune with you, or, if you will, he will give you the whole of it. All that we possess, take it, I implore you."

"I thank you, Madame, for providing me with an opportunity of ennobling my offence. I want of you only yourself."

The child was seized with a fresh paroxysm.

"Well!" the unhappy mother attempted again, "since it is me that you want, save my child, and perhaps then I shall love you, because you will have been generous and noble. I cannot give myself to you without loving you; make me love you."

"Time is passing," Samuel remarked.

"But after all," Christiane cried, "you are a doctor and it is your duty to succour and save those who are suffering and dying. If you refuse you will be punished."

"I am not a doctor, Madame, and only if I perform a cure am I liable to incur punishment."

Christiane said nothing for a few seconds, turning over in her mind what she ought to say and do, in face of this determined obstinacy.

"Sir, I implore you, on my knees, with clasped hands, will you not yield to my entreaties? Sir, if you love me as you say you do, you will not convince me of your love by murdering my child."

"Your child, Madame! . . . It was through your child you insulted me."

"Sir, yet once again, have mercy. Yet once again I beseech you, I entreat you, on my knees!"

"Madame, try to stop the hands of that clock," said Samuel.

Christiane stood up.

"Ah! it is infamous," said the poor woman, wringing her hands. "Well! I will do without you. The doctors will arrive in time. You lie when you say that in half-an-hour it will be too late."

"It was half-an-hour ten minutes ago,"

Samuel interrupted. "Now it is only twenty minutes."

"You lie!" she burst out. "You say that to frighten me. But I do not believe you; go away. You are a scoundrel. And if I were mad enough to give myself up, who is to tell me that you would save my child afterwards? Would it even be in your power to do so? You are not a doctor, you have admitted as much. The real doctors will be here soon. They will save Wilhelm. I have no need of you. You will lose for the shame of your infamous proposal. And I will have you punished. I will bring you to justice for what you have done to Gretchen. Get you gone." Samuel turned to go.

"I am going," said he. "I came again, because you called me again; yesterday, it was to deliver me up to your father; to-day, so fate decreed, it has been for you to deliver yourself up to me. But you tell me to go, and I obey."

He looked at the clock in passing.

"Twelve minutes have slipped away," said he. The child gave a sort of plaintive, heart-breaking groan.

"Sir, do you hear him?" cried Christiane with a despairing sob. "Ah! such a cry would touch even a wild beast."

Samuel stooped over the cradle.

"In another quarter-of-an-hour," he said, "I shall be able to do nothing. At this moment I can answer unhesitatingly for Wilhelm's life. It is you who are without pity, madame. Yes or no? No? I am going. Wait for your doctors. They will find a corpse."

He walked towards the door.

Christiane hesitated for one terrible moment.

"Sir," she said.

Samuel turned, quivering.

"Sir! sir! have you carefully considered what an atrocious thing you are about to do?"

"What waste of words and time!" said Samuel.

"No! I cannot!" sobbed Christiane.

"Then, farewell."

And he took three firm strides.

"Look," she resumed in a low voice, "since you place a mother between the monstrous alternative of killing her honour or her child; well! save Wilhelm, and—I swear that I will be yours."

"No," said Samuel, "such bargains are concluded on the nail. I will save him after."

"Then, no," said she. "Rather must my child die."

Already Samuel was opening the secret door; she rushed after him terror-stricken.

"Another offer," said she. "What do you want? To be revenged on me. You do not love me, you hate me. Well, you can punish me in another way, and your pride will be just as well satisfied. I will kill myself there, under your very eyes, and my boy will live. I tell you of it instead of doing it, because once dead you would be capable of allowing my child to die just the same."

"Indeed," said Samuel. "And I refuse your proposal."

"Oh my God! my God! my God!" moaned the poor mother, wringing her hands.

"Time is passing," remarked Samuel. "Madame, look at your child."

Christiane looked with a haggard eye at the cradle, and her whole body was seized with nervous trembling. The poor little body was all stiff and stark, and the scarce perceptible breath that issued from his parted lips resembled already the death-rattle.

She turned towards Samuel, crushed and defeated.

"I am ready," she murmured in a broken voice, as if exhausted. "But know one thing: If I do not kill myself before, I will kill myself after!"

"Why?" said Samuel. "I will undertake, if you are afraid of my rights, never to appear before you again. Besides, Gretchen has not killed herself, and she had no child. Christiane, I love you."

"And I hate you!" exclaimed Christiane.

"I know quite well you do!" said Samuel.

The words decided her never to consent; but one cry of the child, and the mother was determined to break her resolve.

"Oh! villain!" said she, as she felt his arms close round her; "in vain will you implore forgiveness some day; nor God, nor I will then be able to grant it you."

CHAPTER LXIII

CALAMITY AND VENGEANCE

SOME weeks after that horrible night, Gretchen had just returned to her hut, and was humming over to herself some vague monotonous air, as mad people usually do, when she saw the door open, and Christiane appear, pale, mournful, terrifying.

Christiane's face wore such a look of suffering and despair, that the goat-herd started from her reverie.

"Has anything fresh happened?" she asked.

Christiane made no reply. She sank on to the floor and crouched there, her head on her breast, her face in her hands, not uttering a word, like a statue of misery.

Gretchen, struck with amazement, approached and knelt beside her.

"Madame! my dear mistress! whatever ails you?" she said. "I had not seen you for seven days and was feeling very anxious. We cannot desert each other now. What is the matter? Surely your misery has not become greater than it was?"

Christiane slowly raised her head.

"Yes," she replied, "it has."

"Oh! how can that be? I do not think so. God would not permit such a thing."

"Oh, God!" Christiane repeated with a bitter smile. "Listen, Gretchen, listen to what God has done. I do not know whether the child He has put in my womb is my Julius' child, or the child of Samuel."

Gretchen could not repress a cry of horror.

Since the fatal night, Gretchen no longer avoided Christiane, and Christiane sought no one but Gretchen.

That night, when Samuel had at last rung for the maids, to ask for the things necessary for the treatment of Wilhelm, Gretchen, who was watching in the boudoir, had been the first to enter.

And, while the maids were hurrying to and fro, and Samuel attending to the child, Gretchen had approached Christiane, who remained in a corner, immovable and dry-eyed.

For a moment she had gazed at her sadly and compassionately; then taking her hand, she had said quite in a whisper:

"He did not threaten us in vain."

"What is it?" Christiane had replied, drawing herself up haughtily, a painful flush dyeing her cheeks.

"Ah! you distrust your sister in misfortune," Gretchen had replied.

She had said this in a tone of such tender reproach, with such touching familiarity, with the tears standing in her eyes, that all Christiane's haughtiness had melted away, and she had held out her hand to the goat-herd.

"Oh! at least, my sister, be silent."

Then, as if relieved by this disclosure, she had burst into tears.

Samuel, too, had fulfilled his part of the awful compact. The mother lost, he had saved the child.

On the arrival of the doctors they had found Wilhelm out of danger.

And then there appeared on Christiane's face such a look as, probably, no human face will ever wear again,—a look of celestial joy mingled with the despair of a damned soul.

The doctors, judging their presence unnecessary, had withdrawn. One only, in case of any fresh development arising, had remained at the castle.

Samuel had bowed gravely and respectfully to Christiane.

"Madame," he had said, "can I be of any further use to you?"

"Sir," Christiane had replied, without raising her eyes, and with a quiver in her voice, "you will remember your oath to me? 'That of my own free-will, you will not see me again?'"

"Yes, madame. You both know," he had added with a glance which included both Christiane and Gretchen, "that I keep my word, whatever it may be." With another bow he had gone.

Neither Christiane nor Gretchen had seen him since.

Two days later the baron had returned from Ostend, bringing the farewell messages of Julius to Christiane.

"Are you ready to leave?" he had asked.

"Where for, father?"

"For Berlin. Is it not decided so?"

"No," Christiane had said. "I have changed my mind."

She had excused herself on the plea of Wilhelm's illness; the shock of two nights ago had weakened him. It would be unwise to allow him to travel in that condition."

"But what about Samuel?" the baron had objected.

"Oh! I am not afraid of him now," Christiane had replied shaking her head.

"Is it possible you can have seen him again?"

"You believe my word, do you not, father?"

"Of course, Christiane."

"Well! believe me, I have nothing to fear now from that quarter."

The baron had attributed the strange tone in which Christiane had said this to her anxiety of mind consequent on the departure of Julius and the critical condition of Wilhelm. He had, however, tried to insist, feeling uneasy at leaving Christiane alone in this isolated castle. But Christiane had shown herself firmly resolved. The idea of leaving her home now was unbearable to her. It seemed to her that the eyes of her father-in-law would eventually discover on her brow and on her lips the infamous kisses of the wretch to whom she had sold her honour for the life of her child.

What she craved for was solitude; she longed to be like Gretchen, alone in the world, that she might shut herself up in a hut where no one would enter.

The baron, finding that he could not induce Christiane to alter her decision, had been obliged to leave her a few days later. Before leaving, he had suggested sending her her little nephew Lothario."

"Thank you, thank you! but enough of children," she had exclaimed. "Keep him with you; children are our ruin. One alone has cost dear enough already."

"You used to be so fond of him."

"Yes, I have been too fond of children. That has been my misfortune."

The baron had again attributed these strange words to wifely and motherly fears. Christiane's mind had no doubt been affected by two shocks so sudden and coming so close together. But she would become reconciled to her husband's absence, and, as her child grew stronger, her mind would recover its normal balance.

So the baron had gone away somewhat reassured. Christiane had only asked that he would send a doctor to take up his residence at the castle. The Baron knew an old physician, celebrated for his treatment of children's diseases, and who would be glad to live in retirement. Pending his arrival, Christiane was to retain the services of the doctor from Neckarsteinach, so as not to be exposed to the anxiety of a night like the last.

When all these arrangements were concluded, and the Baron had returned to Berlin, Christiane had at least the consolation of being alone with her shame and sorrow. For a month she had passed her life between her prie-dieu and her baby's cot.

She would speak to no one but Gretchen, and they both found a sort of gloomy joy in talking over their misery and their dishonour. A fresh link, indissoluble indeed, bound them for eternity to one another. Gretchen had spoken truly; they were sisters.

Sometimes Gretchen would come to the castle; more often Christiane would go to the hut; there, they were more alone, and could talk more unreservedly.

"What am I to do?" Christiane would ask. "Tell Julius to return. But a letter could not reach him at sea. And supposing he did return? even then, what am I to do? Tell him everything? he would challenge Samuel, and that demon would kill him. Conceal everything! I could never have the courage to be such a cowardly hypocrite. How shall I be able to meet him? How shall I endure the touch of his lips on this dishonoured face where that villain's lips have rested? Better to die. Ah! if I had not Wilhelm! Unhappy women that we are, to wish for children! Mine has already condemned me to disgrace, and now he condemns me to live."

"Yes, one must live," Gretchen would reply, "else that would be questioning the justice of God. Trust me, my sister, that man will be punished. Let us be patient, and await his chastisement. Who knows that we may not contribute towards it? We are needed here; we have not the right to desert our post."

The superstitions of the goat-herd penetrated Christiane's despair. Madness is contagious. Gretchen, more and more cut adrift from the actual world, drew Christiane with her in her visions and fancies. The tender, sensitive soul of Christiane now viewed life and the future through a species of vague and ever-increasing frenzy. Her conscience vacillated like a flame at the mercy of a high wind, and in her eyes things assumed the exaggerated and terrible proportions that objects present in the dusk.

So for a whole month Christiane saw Gretchen every day. Then, all of a sudden, she ceased to visit even her. She no longer came to the hut. On the third day, Gretchen went to the castle; Christiane would not see her. She had locked herself in her room, refusing to open the door or speak to any one, and Gretchen was at a loss to understand what new development of disaster and shame made her now unable to endure even the gaze of her companion in misfortune.

Seven days had therefore passed since Christiane had seen her when on the above-mentioned evening she rushed into the hut with the terrible news.

Struck dumb by such a calamity, Gretchen at first could only utter a cry of dismay and had not a word to say.

Christiane went on, plucking at her hair with both her hands.

"That is my position. What is to become of me? Is it not too awful for a poor girl who has not yet reached her seventeenth year? And you spoke of the justice of God!"

Then Gretchen drew herself up to her full height, as if moved by some wild inspiration.

"Yes," said she, "I spoke of the justice of God, and I maintain what I said. There is some purpose in all this. The God who is in Heaven cannot have sent you this added suffering for the sole pleasure of torturing so young and frail a creature. Listen; he sends us an avenger. Yes, I predict that this child will avenge us. Our ruin will be the means of punishing the villain. Ah! the sin has produced the punishment; on our knees, my sister, and let us thank God! The coward will be punished."

And, in a transport of savage joy, Gretchen knelt down and began to murmur a prayer of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER LXIV

THE QUESTION

CHRISTIANE in her anguish, still clung to one doubt, or rather one hope. Perhaps she had spoken too soon; perhaps she was mistaken; perhaps her fear had been imaginary. She waited.

But this very hope was destined to bring her but added pain; for it made time a torment; each hour, each day brought home to her slowly but surely the awful certainty.

At last, the time came when it was impossible for her to doubt. The appalling truth was revealed to her in all its horror.

What would she do with this child? Bring it up under the name and under the eyes of her husband, a child who belonged perhaps to another, or else cast it off and give to Samuel a child who might be the child of Julius, which of these two alternatives was the most cruel and the most impossible? How would she look upon her child? with the proud enraptured look of the happy wife glad to let the whole world see the fruit of her love, or with the shamed malevolent look of the wretched adulteress, anxious to hide from God Himself the fruit of her sin?

Ah! never would she be able to live face to face with the living witness of her fall, with the melancholy secret, with that terrible question put everlastingly to her mind by unfathomable nature.

It must be remembered that Christiane was a pure and innocent soul, incapable of compounding with evil or glossing over a fault. Her stain, even though involuntary, tortured none the less with remorse this young loyal heart, offended none the less the purity of this virgin soul.

Tell Julius all? Ah! at the first word, she would fall dead. And then, was it not enough that she should have been subjected to all this torture and infamy, without making her husband share them? And after all, had she saved Wilhelm at this cost, only to kill Julius?

Why had she not done away with herself at once? The baron would have taken care of Wilhelm until the return of Julius. Julius would have mourned for her for some time, then he would have married some other woman worthy of him. Now, she had no right to kill herself; she would no longer die alone. Suicide would be murder.

And unceasingly, whether awake or asleep, would return the awful question, "Whose child is it?"

There were some days when she loved this child. After all, whoever its father was, none the less was she its mother. She was moved to pity at the fate of this poor creature, disowned before it was born. She was angry with herself at having for a moment thought of giving it to Samuel, of sending it away from the castle, of exiling it from her arms. On those days she had no difficulty in persuading herself that it was Julius' child.

But there were days, and these were the most frequent, when she believed that Samuel was the father of the child. Her whole being revolted at the thought, as if it were a thief who desired to rob little Wilhelm of the half of his inheritance. At night especially, in her moments of sleeplessness, when her brain was tortured by the monstrous visions of darkness, she would curse him, wish that he might never come into the world, threaten to smother him. Oh! he must evidently be Samuel's child, for God would not have allowed her to hate the child of Julius.

She no longer slept in her own bed, defiled from henceforth. Nor had she wished to occupy Julius' room, feeling that she was no longer worthy to enter it. She lay on a couch in the boudoir. But she had taken the precaution of having a heavy piece of furniture placed in front of the panel through which Samuel had entered. But this was from superstition rather than precaution, for Samuel always kept his word. And, besides, were there not many other means of entrance known to himself alone, the man who had built this castle.

And during these nights, so long to her who very rarely closed her eyes, in the pale gleam of a night light always burning in case the child were ill, or in the melancholy twilight, she would sometimes fix her eyes on the ceiling with an imperious, magnetic gaze, hoping that it might fall on her head and put an end at one stroke to her agony of mind. Or else, in her delirium, she would pray that a storm might wreck Julius' ship and drown her husband, or at least, cast him on some island from which he would never return.

"Let all be lost," she would cry. "He in the sea, I in hell; but at least let all be over!"

She would fling herself on her knees before the crucifix, and implore God to pardon her for having had such terrible thoughts.

The thing she dreaded most was Julius' return. He had been gone three months. He might return any day. Whenever this thought crossed Christiane's mind, she would turn icy cold, fling herself on the floor, hiding her face, and remain there, sometimes an hour, without moving.

One morning, the nurse brought her a letter.

Christiane glanced at the envelope and gave a cry. It was a letter from Julius.

Two hours passed, and yet she dare not open it. But an idea reassured her; the letter was from New York. Evidently Julius was not yet on his way home, else there would have been no need to write, since he would have arrived as soon as his letter.

This lifted a weight of her mind.

But this very relieff gave her fresh torture.

"And so it has come to this," she said; "that I am glad that Julius should not return."

She opened the letter.

Julius in fact, wrote that he was detained in New York for some weeks. He had arrived in perfect health. The delight that his arrival had given his uncle Fritz had resulted in a visible improvement in the condition of the invalid. But, the doctors could not give any hope yet. To deprive his uncle of this glimpse of home and country would be to kill him. Julius must therefore prolong this separation, hard though it was for him to do so.

But he would not remain a moment longer than gratitude and humanity demanded. He had left his heart at Landeck, and he hungered for a glimpse of Christiane and Wilhelm. It was evident that in speaking of his dear ones, he had restrained himself for fear of making Christiane sad; but love and loneliness had wrung these few words from him.

Somewhat reassured by this respite, Christiane grew more calm, and bore her sorrow more quietly.

Time slips by, even when we suffer. The weeks succeeded each other.

At the end of December the baron came to visit his daughter-in-law and tried to draw her from her seclusion at least during the depressing months of rain and snow.

But, as on the first occasion, he failed to persuade her.

She excused herself on the pretext of her sadness at the prolonged absence of Julius.

The baron found her greatly altered. She, however, confessed to not feeling very well.

"Ah! is that so?" asked the baron with a smile.

"Oh! you are mistaken, my father!" she had the courage to say, shuddering inwardly.

She had concealed her condition from every one. She had resolved to hide it so long as was possible. Why? she could not have said. It was always so much gained. Gretchen alone was in her confidence. A dangerous confidante with her hallucinations and feverish reveries.

The baron returned to Berlin, and Christiane relapsed into the monotony of her despair. From time to time she received letters from Julius, who was detained from week to week by the fluctuating condition of his uncle's health. She struggled bravely with herself to write him a few short, sad lines, in which she made no mention of her condition, trustfully leaving in God's hands the "dénoûement" of the drama.

Thus the winter slipped by.

In the middle of April a sad event gave a fresh turn to Christiane's anxieties.

Wilhelm was taken seriously ill.

The old doctor from Berlin was at the castle. For the first two weeks the child's illness did not appear to be of a serious nature.

Christiane nursed and tended this dearly loved boy with the love, the devotion, the passion of a mother to whom her child has cost more than life.

But suddenly other symptoms appeared. This time no medical skill was wanting. In addition to the clever old doctor, three or four of his most famous confrères from Frankfort and Heidelberg were summoned in consultation. All their efforts were of no avail.

On the twenty-fifth day of the malady, Wilhelm died.

When the doctor announced the mournful news to Christiane, who, for some days, had known that he could not recover, she said not a word, but looked at the clock.

The hands pointed to a quarter before midnight.

"That's it," murmured Christiane; "the very hour of the compact. He was to die at this hour. That was a bargain with hell which God could not sanction."

And she fell heavily to the floor beside the cot, to kiss for the last time the cold forehead of her little one.

Whether it was the result of the fall, she knew not—but, as the shock vibrated through her whole being, she felt a stirring of life within her.

"Already," she thought, turning pale. "Yes, quite possible; it's already seven months ago."

As she rose, trembling, from her knees, the baron, to whom the docter had written to Berlin, arrived in great haste. In his hand was a letter.

"You come too late, father," said Christiane, pointing to her dead child. "He is just gone."

"But I bring you consoling news, my dear daughter; Julius will soon be home."

Christiane sprang to her feet.

"Julius!" said she, turning white as death.

"Look, read this," said the Baron,—and he gave her the letter.

Julius wrote that his uncle Fritz was dead. He would leave for home immediately after the funeral; and arrive at Landeck about the 15th of May.

This was the 13th.

"Ah! startling news indeed!"

And she fell backwards in a swoon.

CHAPTER LXV

NAPOLEON AND GERMANY

WHILE these sorrows and fears were agitating the heart of a woman, great and formidable events were convulsing Europe.

Napoleon, after having hesitated a long time, had raised the grand army, and declared war against Russia. He had started from Paris on the 9th of May for that epic campaign of 1812, and at the same time as Christiane, half distracted, wondered what fate was going to make of her, the astonished world watched what Napoleon was going to make of fate.

On the 11th of May the Emperor had arrived at Mayence, where, on the 12th, he inspected the troops, visited the fortifications and received the Grand Duke of Hesse Darmstadt.

During the night of the 12th and 13th there was a meeting of the Tugendbund, in the secret hall of the Double-Castle.

On this occasion, the Seven who had attended the first meeting, were present.

They were masked, although they met alone. As soon as they had all taken their seats around the table, the president addressed them :

"Friends and brothers," said he, "I enter without preamble on the subject in hand, for time is short. You see for yourselves, everything appears to turn against us. We waited for the day when Napoleon would recommence the war, convinced that our princes would seize that great opportunity to separate themselves from his cause and join forces with his enemies. Well! this rising in arms, which we hoped would be the signal of an insurrection throughout Germany, Napoleon has turned it into a formidable and unprecedented triumph, and the German princes do not march against him but with him. The vanquished of Wagram, of Jena, and of Madrid, swell the ranks of the conquering army against Russia. Napoleon has expressed the wish that our kings should come to do him homage as he passes through; not one will fail to comply with this command. At Dresden he will find himself surrounded by a Court of Crowned Heads. Saxony, Wurtemberg, Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Austria, and Naples, each will vie with the other in forming part of this humble and dazzling procession. This is the degradation to which we have sunk! So much for our kings. Let us pass on to the people."

And, addressing one of the Seven, who had a packet of letters in front of him :

"Read the reports," added the president.

He to whom the chief spoke, opened a first letter and read as follows :—

"MAYENCE.

"Napoleon has been received with enthusiasm. Offers to accommodate his escort pour in from all sides. People fraternise at every step. Civilians and soldiers—all are wildly excited. It is a state of universal adoration. The Emperor is a God here."

"But," interrupted the president, "that only relates to French Germany. Read the other."

The reader opened the second despatch, and read :—

"WURTZBURG.

"At the news that Napoleon is to pass through on the evening of the 13th, the people from the towns and surrounding country are pouring in, all eager to see him. At the gates are triumphal arches erected in his honour. A military concert will be offered him, and, this morning, the crowd, that stands listening to the rehearsal, loudly applauds the French airs which the band performs. Everything is 'en fête.' Illumination lamps are at a premium. The whole town is to be illuminated."

"At Wurtzburg," said the chief, "we are not yet at the heart of Germany. We may perhaps feel it pulsate at Dresden."

The reader took up a third report :—

"DRESDEN.

"The King and Queen of Saxony are making their preparations to welcome the Emperor Napoleon. The town will follow the King's lead, and, swelled by the population from twenty leagues round about, will go out to meet the great man. We have here a crush of princes and kings, a 'mêlée' of thrones, an assembly of crowned heads. As to the people, they are dazzled; enthusiasm knows no bounds. Napoleon will be deafened with acclamations. At the theatre, a play adapted to the circumstances is in course of preparation, in which he is lauded to the skies. The King has read the manuscript and conferred the Legion of Honour on the author. All the seats are booked. . . ."

"Enough!" interrupted the president. "Let us turn our eyes away from this humiliation of our country. This is the manner in which Germany receives a master! She licks the feet of the man who tramples her in the dust! This man goes out to war as a conqueror returns from it; he triumphs in advance, so certain is he of success!"

The president added, not without pride :

"We, however, remain; the Tugendbund still exists."

And he turned to another of the Seven :

"Tell us the state of the Tugendbund."

"Alas!" this one replied, "in all parts

our members are demoralised. This universal acclamation which follows the steps of the conqueror, appears to them to confirm the consecration of Providence, which has raised him from his humble position and placed him on this pedestal. Superstition is rife. Many have sent in requests to withdraw. Nearly every one believes that God is with Napoleon, and that it is impious to fight against him."

"That is the conclusion of the whole matter," resumed the chief. "So, everywhere, we find cowardice, pusillanimity, self-abasement. Not one soul that will avenge human nature, and, in the general prostration, refuse to bow down. Every one cringes at his feet. The clanking of the spurs of the passing despot strikes fear into all these once gallant hearts, that grovel in the dust and allow themselves to be crushed without a murmur. Ah! has Germany indeed come to this. Must we give up our independence? Must we renounce the work and say:, 'Since you wish to be slaves, be it so! Will no one come forward for the good of all? Is there not a man to be found?"

As the president uttered these despondent words, a bell resounded feebly above the seat he occupied.

"What is that noise?" asked one of the Seven.

"That is our host, Samuel Gelb," said the chief. "He asks admittance."

"Admit him!" they all rejoined. "He is perhaps the bearer of better news."

The chief rang a bell.

"I was asking if no man could be found," said he. "Who knows if God is not answering my prayer? Samuel is a strong and courageous champion who might indeed be the very man needed for the country and freedom."

CHAPTER LXVI

SAMUEL IS FOR IMITATING JOSHUA

A MINUTE later Samuel entered the secret chamber of the council of the Union.

He bowed low, and waited for the chief to question him.

"Samuel Gelb, have you any communication to make?" asked the chief.

"Yes," replied Samuel.

"Speak. What do you know, and what can you do?"

"What do I know?" Samuel said. "I know that the Emperor Napoleon has just entered Germany, and that at this present moment he is but a few miles from here. I know that around him moves an army of 420,000 men, with six pontoon trains, 11,000 forage waggons, 1,372 guns, besides 60,000 Austrians, Prussians, and Spaniards. I know that, on his side, the Emperor Alexander has succeeded in arming 300,000 men, divided into three armies; the army of the East, under Barclay; the army of the West, under Bagration; and the reserve army, under Tormasof. Besides this there are two other army corps, and a vast camp intrenched behind these three armies. I know, in fact, that never has the world beheld a more formidable encounter of empires and of nations. You ask what I can do? I can cause all this terrible commotion to vanish like a soap-bubble."

"Is it possible?" said the chief. "Tell us how."

A murmur of surprise and incredulity arose from these impassive and haughty men.

"Ah! this astonishes you?" Samuel rejoined. "You cannot imagine it possible that a humble associate of the second-class can be capable of such a miracle. If, however, I accomplish what I say, will you consider me deserving of some reward, shall I have proved myself worthy of promotion to the first degree of the Union?"

"Do what you say," answered the chief, "and then ask what you will."

"You will remember your promise?"

"I give you my oath! But explain what you intend to do. What methods will you employ? Will you act as did Brutus? Have you picked up the dagger of Friedrich Staps from the foot of his blood-stained scaffold?"

"Only to miss my stroke, is that what you think? and thus increase the tyrant's popularity by giving colour to the idea that Providence watches over him? Not so, my masters. No! I shall not glide through the crowd to pierce Napoleon to the heart, so that his guard may tear me to pieces and that the good people of Germany, whom I wish to rescue, may reward me by trampling me to death. Napoleon will die, and I shall live. From here will I strike him, without leaving this mountain on which we are, from afar, from above, like Jupiter."

"What do you mean? explain yourself."

"The time is not yet ripe. You know the end, what matters the means."

"Are you jesting, sir?" asked the chief severely.

"At the most I am only showing some natural reluctance to reveal my plans," was Samuel's rejoinder. "Of course, all you gentlemen here present, are high and important personages, above all suspicion, above all crime. But to save a Napoleon, is a temptation to any one. I should be afraid of its tempting God Himself, if I believed in God. I therefore follow but the dictates of common prudence in asking you to permit me to keep my plan to myself until such time as it becomes impossible to prevent the execution of it."

"Then why tell us the half of your plan?" asked the president.

"To ascertain in advance if you would be grateful to me. You might easily, like the princes and people of Germany, have become satellites of the sun, and delivered up or punished your deliverer. In the second place, was it not necessary to convince you that you must meet again to-morrow to decide, in case of need, on some course of action? Listen, it is two o'clock in the morning; at this moment Napoleon has left Mayence, and is on his way to Wurtzburg. To-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, he will halt at Aschaffenburg for breakfast. Aschaffenburg is only a few miles from here. Remain close at hand to-night; and to-morrow, at two o'clock, assemble again in this hall. I will then tell you what I have done. After that we will await the result."

"How shall we know it?" asked the president.

"At two o'clock," said Samuel, "one of our men, the traveller of the Neckar, will be here, and will bring the news that what your Providence itself would have hesitated to do, Samuel Gelb has accomplished."

"Agreed," said the president, "we will be here, at ten o'clock, and will wait your news."

CHAPTER LXVII

IN THE GRIP OF PAIN

ON that same night, a few paces distant from the meeting of the Seven, Gretchen, who was always in her hut, suddenly heard some one calling outside, and loud knocking at her door.

"Who is there? Is it you, madame?" she asked.

"Yes," said the voice of Christiane.

Gretchen quickly opened the door.

Christiane came in, half dressed, her hair unbound, looking wild and scared.

"Whatever has happened, madame?" Gretchen asked; "how comes it that you have left your apartments and the castle at this hour?"

"I do not know," Christiane said at first with a vacant look. "Ah! yes, wait, I remember, I have escaped. No one has seen me. The Baron von Hermelinfeld is there. I fell backwards. And then the pains began; the first pains of childbirth, Gretchen! Gretchen! I am about to be confined."

"What!" cried Gretchen, half frightened, half glad, "but the time has not expired. Oh! then your child is the child of Herr von Eberbach?"

"No, Gretchen, I am sure not. Oh! if only I could deceive myself, I would deceive the others too. But no! make my life one long falsehood, I would rather die! Gretchen, Wilhelm is dead .... Julius is on his way home .... I fell senseless to the ground .... and all these misfortunes have precipitated the last .... Oh! I suffer! if only I could die!"

All this she said disconnectedly, without sequence, looking half-distracted, and seizing the hands of Gretchen, who appeared equally troubled.

"What is to be done?" said Gretchen. "Ah! I am going for the doctor."

And she took one step towards the door. Christiane rushed after her and caught her by the arm.

"Will you stay where you are, wretched girl! I have not escaped so as to live, but to die, to hide myself in the bowels of the earth, to destroy myself in some abyss. Dead, my Julius will love me, will respect me, will mourn me. Life! do I want to live? What I want is secrecy! Try to understand what I tell you. I do not know what is the matter with my brain. I must be going mad. But secrecy, secrecy at all costs."

"Secrecy at all costs!" repeated Gretchen, entirely losing her head, too.

The atrocious physical pain, added to that terrible agony of mind, succeeded in mastering Christiane. She had flung herself on Gretchen's bed. There she remained for some moments, a prey to torture and hallucination, but maintaining this one idea fixed in her mind that she must conceal her misery and her shame from all, and biting her handkerchief to smother her cries.

Gretchen was sobbing and hovering restlessly about her, useless, anxious, desperate.

During a moment of respite Christiane called her.

"Gretchen, swear that you will do what I ask."

"I swear it, my dear mistress."

"That, whatever happens, you will divulge my secret to no one, neither to the baron, nor to my Julius, nor even to that monster."

"To no one."

"If the child lives, Gretchen, you will take him to this Samuel, but without letting any one know, see, or suspect it."

"That's it!" exclaimed Gretchen, with savage delight, "let us fling the devil's progeny back to the devil."

"Ah! and yet it is my child, my only child!" said Christiane, seized with another paroxysm of pain. "Oh! but the poor infant must be dead! Oh! my God, let me die too, let me die too! Gretchen, if the child is dead, you will bury it, do you understand, yourself, alone, at night, in the forest. Do you swear to do this?"

"I swear."

"And then, Gretchen, bury me too. Let no one know . . . . Oh! my Julius, adieu! I loved you so well . . . . To die without seeing you again! . . . . Gretchen, the secret, the secret; the secret at all costs."

And she fell back senseless.

"The secret; yes, I understand," said Gretchen. And she repeated several times as if mechanically:

"The secret!—at all costs, the secret."

CHAPTER LXVIII

TRICHTER DRUNK—WITH FEAR

THE next morning, the whole town of Aschaffenburg was "en fête."

Men, women, tiny children, and even old men of over eighty, flocked into the streets of the town and outside the walls. Napoleon was coming. The man of history who filled all minds was about to appear before their eyes. Every one would be able to compare him to the idea they had formed of him.

A tremendous stir agitated this vast sea of heads, like the tide, flowing beneath the compelling influence of the moon.

The crowds hurried by. Everything was forgotten; business, cares of the previous day, affairs in process of settlement. Handsome lads, walking arm-in-arm with pretty lasses, availed themselves of this opportunity to steal a few kisses, which the maidens, it must be confessed, seemed nothing loth to accept, but returned with interest. One solitary being was melancholy in this universal rejoicing.

This was our friend Trichter.

He walked about sad and dejected, with a new acquaintance whom he had just made, and who was none other than the traveller from the Neckar.

"But what in the world is the matter with you?" queried the latter.

"My dear Raümer," said Trichter, "I am excited."

"Excited with wine," the traveller asked judiciously, who, at the sight of Trichter's flaming nose, had soon recognised in him a drunkard.

"Bah!" Trichter replied with scorn, "for the last fifteen years wine has had no effect upon me. Not that I have abstained from drinking this morning. On the contrary, foreseeing the excitement which, at this very moment, is half choking me, I was anxious to whet my fancy a little; I tried to get drunk. Futile endeavour! I see it now with sorrow, I can make myself ill, I can kill myself with drink, I can flood, I can drown myself with liquor; but, oh! lamentable weakness! I can no longer get drunk. What helplessness!"

"But," said Raümer, "why the devil were you so keen on getting drunk today?"

"Because I have to present a petition to Napoleon."

"What petition?"

"A petition that Samuel has himself drawn up. Can you imagine my position? To approach this great man, to look at him, speak to him if he questions me, speak to this sublime and colossal Emperor before whom the very cannon thunder in lowered tones. How can I do this in cold blood? Excited! I should think I *am* excited, my friend. Ah! at times I tingle from head to foot!"

"Nonsense!" said the traveller. "You exaggerate the matter. It's a mere nothing to present a petition. Shall I present it for you?"

"No," Trichter answered, "Samuel made me swear to present it myself."

"Well! you will present it. An aide-de-camp will take it from you; the Emperor will go on his way, without even bestowing a glance upon you. Do not imagine for a moment that he will read your petition?"

"I am certain that he will," said Trichter. "Samuel has made sure and reliable inquiries. At Mayence and all along the route, Napoleon has himself opened every petition and dictated the reply on the same evening. He is anxious to win popularity in Germany, which he is leaving in his rear."

"And is this petition of great importance to you?"

"I should think so! It means bread for my old mother. Bread which I will not be able to drink away from her, for, do you know, I am a wretched, insatiable sponge. One day last year I had five thousand florins of my own. I sent her five hundred, with which she paid her debts. I fully intended to send her more. But for a long while our ideal, mine and that of one of my friends called Fresswanst, was to devote ourselves seriously and consistently to some comparative studies on foreign wines. We attacked this work in so conscientious a manner that within three months our throats had drained our purse."

Raümer began to laugh.

"Do not laugh," said Trichter, sadly. "Alas! I lost at the same time my money and my friend. Fresswanst died, after the last bottle, of a rush of blood to the head. A sad end! Between ourselves," Trichter added, lowering his voice, "was Fresswanst deserving of his reputation? Whatever may be the opinion of posterity as to this drinker, I was ruined. I tried to induce Samuel Gelb, my noble 'senior' to arrange for a fresh emigration to Landeck. A delightful village, this Landock, where one goes to bed in nests, where one drinks unparalleled brandy, and from which one returns with five thousand florins! But Samuel would not yield to my wish. Yesterday, to compensate for his refusal, he advised me to present this position, which he himself has drawn up, and as to the result of which he has not a doubt."

"But," rejoined Raümer, "you have then some claim on Napoleon?"

"An uncle of mine was killed in his service. For you must know, my dear fellow, that I am half French on my mother's side. That is why, although German and a student, I can ask a favour at Napoleon's hands without scruple. I speak purer French than did Racine. My uncle was the one who supported my mother; the Emperor has robbed her of her support, it is only fair that he should come to her assistance. If he grants me the pension that I claim for her, it will relieve me of all filial anxiety, and I shall then be able to accomplish alone the experiments which my financial difficulties and the untimely death of that weak Fresswanst interrupted, so unfortunately for my researches. For, if I drink, do not run away with the idea that I do so with the vile object of personal gratification. It is long since it has been any pleasure to me to swill your mild insipid spirits. To me, kirsch and absinthe are milk and honey. With the exception of that species of brandy which I drank at Landeck, and which produced in me, I confess, a mild heat, everything tastes to me like plain water. It is from purely disinterested motives, in the interest of science and from simple love of humanity, that the dilettante who has the honour of addressing you persists in his researches. You will therefore understand of what importance it is to the world that the Emperor should receive and grant my petition."

"He will grant it, I don't doubt," answered Raümer. "But I hear the cheers of the crowd."

"Can it be the great Napoleon?" asked Trichter, all in a tremor.

"No. They are only shouting, 'Long live France!' Probably it is only some of the generals or aides-de-camp who precede him."

"Thank God!" said Trichter, beginning to breathe again.

"Where will you present your petition to him?" Raümer asked.

"Oh! I have already decided on the place. At the entrance of the palace of the prince-primate. The Emperor is to alight there for breakfast, and to receive the deputations from round about. Two of the soldiers forming the line, ardent admirers of my capacity in the way of liquid, have promised to allow me to approach the great man. I am only afraid that I shall be nervous. Ah! if only I had been able to get under the influence of drink. You must think me a great chatterbox. But if I have been talking to you so volubly for the last half-hour, it has not been from the wish to weary you with my affairs, but to get my tongue in practice, if I have to address the Emperor. I am trying to screw my courage up to the sticking point."

All of a sudden Trichter stopped speaking and began to tremble.

"Ah!" he stammered, "this time there is no mistaking the cry of 'Long live the Emperor.'"

And indeed deafening shouts heralded the approach of the man-prodigy. An immense concourse of people surged towards the two men.

CHAPTER LXIX

POISON

THERE was no mistaking the meaning of the shouts and the movement of the crowd.

"It is the Emperor, there's no doubt about it," said the traveller to Trichter; "let us make haste."

And they hastened towards the palace of the prince-primate.

"I do beg of you, my dear Raümer," said Trichter, "to stay near me as long as possible and not to go away. Remain close at hand until I return, that I may have the look of a friend to give me strength when I approach the terrible vision, and the arms of a friend to receive me if I swoon."

He hurried up to two soldiers, who told him to keep close behind them and they would allow him to pass as the Emperor alighted from his horse.

It was time, for almost at once the square, already swarming with people, was invaded by such a crowd, that it became one seething mass, and it would have been impossible for Trichter and Raümer to force their way through the inextricable human maze.

To Trichter time flew by with the rapidity of lightning. His temples throbbed painfully. He felt his heart sink within him, like a foundering ship. He felt tempted to forego his petition and the pension for his mother.

He even went so far as to hope that the Emperor might alter his mind, make peace with Russia, and return to France without entering the palace of the prince-primate.

Suddenly there was a flourish of trumpets, a beating of drums, and Napoleon emerged into the square, accompanied by a storm of cheers.

The Emperor rode beside the carriage of the Empress. He bowed to the crowd.

And Trichter grew more and more petrified at the approach of the Emperor, who, more truly than Atlas, carried the world on his shoulders, in his head, if not upon it.

Arrived in front of the palace of the prince-primate, Napoleon alighted.

The prince-primate, with his suite, stood at the entrance bare-headed.

He gave a short speech of enthusiastic welcome to the Emperor, who replied by a few well-chosen words of thanks; then the Empress stepped from her carriage, and the imperial couple prepared to mount the steps of the palace.

"Now is your time!" said one of the soldiers to Trichter. "Be quick."

Trichter glanced despairingly at Raümer.

"Pray God for me!" he said.

Then, grasping his hand frantically, he advanced with an unsteady step, not, alas! the result of wine.

"Ah! a German student!" said Napoleon. "I love this proud young blood. What can I do for you, my friend?"

Trichter tried to reply, but his utterance was choked and he could not articulate a word.

All he could do was to hold out to this glorious Emperor the petition, which he held in his right hand; and even to accomplish this, he had to leave go his cap, which was in his left hand; he was incapable of holding two things at the same time.

The Emperor took the petition with a smile.

"Calm yourself," said he. "Do you speak French?"

Trichter made a violent effort to regain his self-possession.

"My mother! . . ." he stammered out. "Your Majesty. . . . My uncle too. . . . He is dead. . . . But I. . . . I am not French."

He felt that he was saying the very reverse to what he had intended.

"Well!" said the Emperor, "since you speak French, come in with me, and you yourself will tell me what you want."

The drums beat the salute, and the Emperor ascended the steps, still holding the petition.

Trichter walked behind him, bewildered, ill at ease in this procession, dazzled by all this magnificence, weighed down by all this glory, bathed in the sunshine.

They entered thus into the reception-hall.

The Emperor received graciously the envoys of kings and princes. For each one he had some flattering speech.

To General Schwartzemberg, who represented Austria, he spoke of his military talent, which he knew and appreciated.

To the Baron von Hermelinfeld, who came to offer the respects of the King of Prussia, he said that science was common to all nations, and that minds like his made all men fellow-countrymen.

When the representative of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar was presented to him, he advanced quickly, drew him aside, conversed with him for some moments and, on leaving him said:

"Herr von Goethe, you are indeed a man!"

The audience over, the prince-primate requested the Emperor to pass into the dining-rooms.

"Will you kindly conduct the Empress thither?" said Napoleon. "I shall be with you in a moment. I have some instructions to give—Ah! where is my student?"

Trichter, who had slightly recovered his composure while the Emperor's attention was diverted from him, felt his cursed emotion again get the better of him. He was hustled into a small room which the Emperor entered with only his secretary and two aides-de-camp.

Napoleon sat down at a table.

"Now, my friend," said he to Trichter. "What do you wish to ask of me?"

"Sire, my mother . . . . or rather my uncle. . . . . Yes, sire, a brave soldier of your Majesty's. . . . ." Trichter's hoarse voice tried to answer.

"Compose yourself," said the Emperor. "Where is your petition? Ah! I have it."

He handed it to Trichter.

"Come, since you cannot speak, read it out to me."

Trichter took the petition, broke open the seal, and unfolded it with trembling fingers.

But his eyes had scarcely rested upon it when he staggered and turned pale.

"Well! what is the matter?" said the Emperor.

Trichter fell to the ground, rigid and insensible.

The aides-de-camp rushed forward.

"Don't go near, gentlemen," exclaimed the Emperor, who had risen from his seat, "there is something behind this,"

"Shall we send for a doctor?" asked one of the aides-de-camp.

"No!" said the Emperor, his eyes fixed on the outstretched figure of Trichter. "Send for the Baron von Hermelinfeld. But no noise, no scene, not a word. Only the baron is to come."

A minute later the baron entered.

"Sir," said the Emperor, "here is a man who has just fallen down overpowered whilst reading a paper, see, that paper there, on the floor. Don't touch it; he fell when unfolding it."

The baron approached Trichter.

"The man is dead," he said.

Then he went to the fireplace, took up the tongs, and, with the tongs, held the paper over the smoke, but without allowing the flame to touch it.

But he observed attentively the colour which the smoke assumed.

Then after a moment or two, he drew the paper nearer, and, slowly and cautiously, examined it, felt it, smelt it.

Then all of a sudden he was seen to turn pale.

He had just recognised the composition of a poison recovered from the middle ages, and the secret of which was known to only two persons living: himself and Samuel.

"You look pale," said the Emperor.

"It's nothing," rejoined the baron. "A last emanation, perhaps."

"Do you recognise this poison?" asked Napoleon. "Can it put us on the track of the assassin?"

Baron von Hermelinfeld experienced a moment of hesitation and anxiety. For this once, the life of Samuel Gelb was in his hands.

After a short silence, he replied:

"Sire, I am as yet unable to answer your Majesty. I must analyse this paper. But the probability is that I may discover some clue."

"Very well," said the Emperor. "I have every confidence in your skill and in your loyalty, Herr von Hermelinfeld. But above all, listen to me; we are five of us here. On your honour, gentlemen, on your life," he added, turning to his aides-de-camp and his secretary, "I exact from you absolute silence. The attempt of a Friedrich Staps may be revealed on leaving a country, but not on entering it."

CHAPTER LXX

IN WHICH SAMUEL FALTERS

At the same hour as this was happening at Aschaffenburg, Samuel, in his subterranean chamber of the castle, was revealing to the Seven his attempt, and the means he had adopted.

"It is now a few minutes after ten," Samuel said; "at this moment, Napoleon is dead, the Empire broken up, Germany free."

The Seven answered not a word.

"You are silent!" Samuel resumed. "Am I to understand that you disapprove of what I have done?"

"Friedrich Staps sacrificed himself," said one of the Seven.

"What a paltry scruple!" replied Samuel, shrugging his shoulders. "It is not the general who fires the gun. Besides, it seems to me that your vaunted Providence does not set to work in a different way to me, and that it makes use of us just as I have of Trichter. It employs us for the furtherance of its own plans, and does not hesitate to kill us if our death appears necessary to the life of an idea. What have I done differently? I have sacrificed Trichter, my friend. Of a drunkard I have made a martyr. I do not think he has lost by the exchange. Come, let us have done with these childish scruples! Are you satisfied with me?"

"The means you have employed," the chief said at last, "are between you and your conscience. But if you have in truth delivered Germany, we will only consider the result, and you will have deserved well of your country and of the Tugendbund. When shall we receive the intelligence?"

"The traveller of the Neckar is already on his way! We must wait his arrival."

They waited in the deepest anxiety. At one o'clock the bell rang.

"Here he comes," said Samuel.

And he opened the door.

The traveller of the Neckar entered, slowly and gravely.

"Well?" they all asked.

"I will tell you what I have seen," replied the traveller. "I have carried out to the letter the orders which Samuel Gelb conveyed to me from you. I was with Trichter up to the moment that he presented the petition to Napoleon. The Emperor made him accompany him into the Palace of the Prince-Primate.

"How wonderfully fortunate!" said Samuel.

"One moment!" said the traveller. "As Trichter did not return, I hung about the palace, trying to find some means of entrance, when I perceived two men glide out of a side door, carrying a covered stretcher, and go in the direction of the hospital. I followed these men. The curtain of the stretcher flew apart for one moment. A hand hung down. I recognised a glove similar to those which Trichter wore. I made enquiries from the porter at the hospital. He informed me that he had registered the death of a man, unknown, to be buried that same evening."

"Trichter dead!" interrupted Samuel, visibly affected.

The traveller resumed:

"I went back in the direction of the palace. Just as I arrived in front of it, I saw the Emperor enter his carriage with the Empress, and drive off towards Wurtzburg, in the midst of the unanimous and enthusiastic cheering of the crowd."

These words, which gave no room for doubt, were followed by a long silence.

"That is well," said the president to the traveller from the Neckar, "you may withdraw."

The man bowed and went out.

"Samuel Gelb," resumed the chief, "God is more powerful than you. You have only killed your friend. If we have any advice to give you, it is that you should find a safe place for yourself as soon as you can."

And, turning to his masked companions:

"As to ourselves, gentlemen, we shall do well to disperse."

The Seven went out, leaving Samuel mute and thunderstruck.

CHAPTER LXXI

SUICIDE AND NEW-BORN LIFE

HALF an hour later, Samuel was riding along the road to Heidelberg.

He trotted quietly along without hurrying himself, like a man on his way home, not like one anxious to hide.

On reaching his hotel that evening, he found an old servant awaiting him at the door. He looked at him, and recognised the man as being in the service of the Baron von Hermelinfeld for the last twenty-five years.

"What is it, Tobias?" he asked.

"Herr Samuel," said the servant, "the Herr Baron von Hermelinfeld has sent me to you in all haste. He has not written, but you will guess the reason why, so he told me; but he charged me to repeat to you his words 'verbatim,' saying that it was unnecessary that I should understand them, and commanding me to forget them as soon as I had transmitted them to you."

"Speak," said Samuel.

"The Herr Baron sends you this message: 'I was at Aschaffenburg, I know all, I can prove everything, you are in my power, and, if you have not left German soil within twelve hours! . . . . .' This is, word for word, all that the Herr Baron made me learn by heart, and commanded me to tell you."

These words, repeated in an expressionless tone and as if mechanically, produced a singular effect upon Samuel.

"The message is sufficiently clear, I confess," said he. "Well! you will thank the Baron from me, Tobias."

"Then, the Herr Baron told me that if you were in want of money, I was to hand you over. . . . ."

"Enough," interrupted Samuel. "You will tell him, Tobias, since you are so exact an emissary, that I interrupted you at this point, and did not allow you to complete your sentence."

"And will you go away, sir? I must again ask for your reply on behalf of the Herr Baron."

"He will know. I shall see. I am still undecided. I cannot say yes or no."

"Then my commission is done, sir, and I shall return."

"Good-bye, Tobias."

Tobias bowed and departed.

Samuel went to his room.

He threw himself into a chair, placed his two elbows on the table and let his head fall between his hands.

The almost visible intervention of God in his plan had somewhat startled him.

He thought:

"What am I to do? How do I stand? Let me recapitulate the balance sheet of my life. It is a poor one.

"The Baron will give me up to justice, I have no doubt. It is evident that, this time, my fate is in his hands. The seducer of Gretchen could hold in check the seducer of my mother. But a murder, a crime of high treason exposes me, betrays me without mercy—disadvantage number one. On the other hand, instead of gaining a higher position in the Guild of Virtue, rather have I gone lower. These narrow intellects would have admired me in success, but they scorn me in defeat. I saw it unmistakably in their hurried departure, and disdainful farewells. My aim in this direction is postponed, perhaps for ever. So much for the active part. And now as regards the sentimental. No one cares for me, and I care for no one. That sheep called Julius, and that fool called Trichter, are now, to all intents and purposes, dead to me. As to women, I have pursued love, that human expression of the Infinite, into its most painful contrasts. I have tried to excite it out of violence and hatred as we do fire from iron and stone; futile attempt and useless crime. Ah! I am weary and sick of the whole thing.

"Shall I take refuge in flight! Am I indeed reduced to flee, I, Samuel Gelb? And where shall I go? My safest refuge would be the lion's mouth; Paris, Paris, the modern capital, the Rome of intellect, the new City, has always attracted me. It is a theatre worthy of me. Yes, but what part can I play there? The scholar? I would be asked for my diplomas. The politician? I shall be a stranger. It means starting life afresh. And recommencing when one has finished, what more irksome and nauseating?

"Bah! supposing I gave myself up to justice. After all, that would embarrass the baron and perhaps the Emperor. Who knows whether Napoleon might not pardon my offence, so as to pose as a Titus or an Augustus in the eyes of Germany? He could not condemn to death a man who had given himself up of his own free will. And the worthy baron would look rather sheepish. Ah! they would have me strangled in my cell. And then, am I willing to accept pardon from any one? am I willing to live on charity? Perhaps Napoleon would have me tried. In that case, mine would be a famous trial, and the eyes of all Europe would be fixed on Napoleon and Samuel Gelb.

"A fine ambition! Provide entertainment for the gaping crowd? Is that what I aim at? This swarm of humanity, of which ninety-nine hundredths spend their life in gaining money, and think that man's aim on earth is to amass a certain quantity of coins of a certain metal, this swarm of humanity disgusts me.

"Influence it, of what use? Too much time would be lost in making it advance, and one man alone does too little. I could understand the rôle of reformer or civiliser if, at one stroke, we were able to extemporsie the future. But there is a world of difference between what we imagine we can do, and what we actually perform. Of what use to start on a journey when we know beforehand that we shall never reach the end of it. Would Christopher Columbus have put out to sea if he had known that on the second day of the voyage he would die. A fig for beginning things, and passing them on to others to finish! I am quite willing to move mountains, even at the risk of being crushed under them; but I refuse to crumble them to pieces, and remove them by barrowfuls. Civilisers, mighty carriers of grains of sand! I give it up.

"The shortest, the most simple and the least theatrical way would be to cut my throat. This was the custom of the Romans, and it was not without its greatness. I'll do away with myself! that's decided. The idea of suicide has always appealed to me. Death, involuntary, necessary, fatal, has always been repugnant to me; to come to the grave like an ox to the slaughter, is sheer animalism. To make our exit from life freely and proudly, as we take ourselves off from some wearisome "soirée" at our own time, when we have had enough of it, when we are tired, when we are satiated, well and good! that is worthy of a man. Let me see, do I forget nothing, regret nothing, is there nothing which makes me hold to life? No. Come, my boy, without any further delay, or reflection, and above all, without making a will, cut your throat."

And this strange man walked quietly up to his dressing table, took a razor and sharpened it.

Suddenly he heard a feeble cry issuing from the recess.

He stopped in surprise.

A second cry followed.

"What in the world does that mean?" said he.

He strode quickly up to the bed and drew aside the curtains.

On the bed, wrapped in swaddling-clothes carelessly knotted together, lay a new-born child.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE ROAD TO PARIS

SAMUEL GELB, at sight of this child apparently fallen from the skies, started back in astonishment.

"Oh! oh! what is this?" he said to himself. "Who the devil has put that child there? He is a pretty little fellow, so far as such a mite of humanity, as yet without a soul, can be pretty. Ah! it's a girl. What an odd adventure!"

He reflected for a moment, assailed by a thousand thoughts.

"Is it a practical joke on the part of some friend? Is it the work of some mother in a moment of despair? Could the child be mine? If it were my child?"

He stopped, surprised himself at the effect which this thought produced upon him.

"But no!" he resumed, "it's impossible. Let me see. This child was born certainly not earlier than yesterday, perhaps to-day. For Gretchen it is too late, and for Christiane too soon. Besides, I should have known it. And of course, in that case, the baron would not have spared me. As to the rest, it is unfathomable, buried in the ocean. Useless to try to solve the problem. The sea would be more likely to tell which river supplies each of its waves. Indubitably I am not the father. Never mind! she is a pretty little girl."

And as the child was beginning to cry, perhaps for hunger, Samuel melted some sugar in a little milk and water, and with a spoon, poured a few drops into the infant's mouth.

"Samuel Gelb metamorphosed into a nurse," he thought. "Ah! how people would laugh if they saw me."

He drew himself up gravely and proudly as if to answer to some challenge.

"And why should they laugh? It is only fools who look upon me as a monster, because I am a man, a man in the fullest sense of the world, a free man, a man unshackled by conventionalities, superior to appearances. That does not hinder me, when I see a tiny creature, helpless, forsaken, and in pain, from succouring it, like a Saint Vincent de Paul, and all the more credit to me, I fancy, since the rewards of Paradise never enter into my speculations. Nevertheless, although I believe myself as capable of good as evil, it is certain that up to the present I have done more evil than good. Opportunity is responsible for this. It might have been just the reverse. And again am I about to do what is called wrong, by sending this child to the hospital?"

He put the child back on the bed with gentle care, and went downstairs to question the people of the hotel.

No one had asked to see Samuel. No one had been observed to take his key and go up to his room.

Samuel went upstairs again.

"Waste of breath!" he thought. "The servant who allowed admittance into my room will have been liberally bribed, or the mother will have entrusted the commission to some one very daring and very clever. Useless trying, I am certain to find out nothing. Could it be a child of Lolotte's? I made mischief between her and Trichter, why did she try to prevent his drinking? she may have deemed it but fair to burden me with his child? Or else some student may have desired to do homage to his king, by presenting him with his offspring. Bah! What does it matter? That children are born, is no reason why men should not die. On the contrary. So I am going to take this rough sketch of a woman to the hospital, and proceed with the occupation which her crying interrupted."

The child again began to cry. He gave it a little more to drink.

"Sleep, little one, the slumber of the beginning, and let me sleep the slumber of the end."

The child grew quiet and appeared, in fact, to fall asleep. Samuel gazed at it.

"Poor little soul! A spirit dwells there. This fragile life, this drop containing an ocean, this ephemera containing an immortality, what will all this become? Hamlet philosophised over a skull, that is to say on the past, on death, on the finite. But how much greater cause for thought on a new-born child, on the future, on life, on the unknown.

"At this present moment, this child, who has come into the world as I was about to leave it, its fate is in my hands. I can let this girl be like myself a bastard, a cursed creature, without father or mother; I could, too, bring her up, love her, save her. Supposing I were to do this? But I was on the point of dying; is it worth troubling about?

"Bah! I don't care very much whether I live or die. And after all, why should I die? Because I have nothing to do here. If I wish, the incentive to live, which was lacking, is here, in my grasp. What greater, more essential incentive could I desire? This is no pretext made to myself, no! I do not pose for my own benefit. But I feel that my existence would have been incomplete, my rôle of Vice-destiny unaccomplished, my Promethian nature would have failed in its ideal, if I had never moulded in my hand that soft and exquisite wax, the education, the mind, the life of a child. What a diversion and what a power! To mould after my own way, to fashion according to my fancy, to carve according to my dream, that divine clay—a soul.

"What should I make of this infant? a demon of perdition or an angel of virtue? a Desdemona or a Lady Macbeth? According to the education I give her, according to the sentiments with which I inspire her, according to the shape in which I mould her, she will be darkness or light, purity or vice, wings or claws. I wondered if I were her father; if I am not, I shall be! What matters whether or no she be the child of my body, she will be the child of my mind! Much better so! Poets and sculptors do a fine thing in producing intangible shadows in books or insensible shapes on pedestals! I, I am greater than Shakespeare or Michael-Angelo; I am a poet and sculptor of souls.

"So, it is decided. Child, I adopt you. The idea of making a new start in life alone, was wearisome to me. It will amuse me to begin afresh with you. I was throwing my life out of window, you happened to be beneath and picked it up. Take it, I give it to you."

Then Samuel quietly put the razor back into its case, went downstairs and gave instructions for a carriage to be brought round the next morning at half-past seven.

"It was at seven o'clock," he said to himself as he went up the staircase, "that Tobias warned me on the part of the baron to make myself scarce within twelve hours. I am curious to see whether Julius' father will actually dare to have me arrested. If, at half-past seven, he has not put in an appearance, I shall go.

Half-past seven o'clock struck the next morning, and yet the baron had given no signs of life to Samuel.

Just then, Herr von Hermelinfeld was occupied with a matter of far greater import.

Samuel therefore went to the Rector to demand his passport; the latter signed it with praiseworthy alacrity, thankful to be at last relieved of such a pupil.

When the horses were harnessed, Samuel took the little money he had, packed a few possessions into a bag and a trunk, and stepped into the carriage, holding the child in his arms, wrapped in his cloak.

"The road to Paris!" he cried to the postillion, in the same tone in which Napoleon must have cried: "The road to Moscow."

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE MOUTH OF HELL

JUST at about the same time as Samuel was saying to his postillion; "The road to Paris!" Gretchen was hurrying back to her hut at Eberbach.

Where did she come from?

She seemed to have come a long distance. Her shoes were covered with dust. Her gown was torn. Her dry, hollow eyes told of a sleepless night.

She appeared exhausted with fatigue. She entered the hut and found it empty.

"What!" she exclaimed, appalled, "can madame have gone? She had no strength but the little resulting from fever and delirium! Oh my God! Has she returned to the castle. I'll run and see."

She was about to hurry away when she caught sight of a piece of paper on the table.

The paper contained a few disjointed lines, written in pencil.

"What does this say?" said Gretchen.

She read the following:—

"You told me that the child was dead. I fainted away, and on regaining consciousness, I find neither it nor you. All the better. As the child is dead, I may die too. Had it lived I should have been obliged to live. Now I may go to rejoin Wilhelm and my father. On your soul and on mine, the secret; never, never reveal our secret."

A cry broke from Gretchen's lips.

"What have I done?" said she.

She rushed to the castle.

There she found, overwhelmed with distress, the baron, who had lately returned from Aschaffenburg, and Julius, who had just arrived from Havre.

They were about to set out in search of Christiane.

Half-an-hour before the arrival of Julius, one of the servants had seen Christiane return to the castle, glide like a phantom up to her room, then descend almost at once and go out.

Julius had rushed up to Christiane's room. The bed had evidently not been slept in.

On the mantel-piece, on the very spot where Julius, on leaving seven months previously, had placed his note of farewell, there was a sealed letter.

Julius has torn it open, and read the following lines:—

"My Julius, forgive me. Your return is my death warrant, and yet I die only because I love you. You would no longer have loved me, perhaps you would have despised me; our child is dead. So you see, I must die too."

"Father!" Julius had cried, aghast.

The baron, after reading the letter which Julius had handed to him, said:

"Take courage. Perhaps it is not yet too late. Let us search for her."

"Search!" Julius had cried, agitated by conflicting emotions.

At this moment Gretchen appeared.

Julius rushed towards her.

"Christiane!" said he, "have you seen Christiane?"

"Do you know what has become of her?"

"I am looking for her!" Gretchen answered. "Is she not here?"

"You are looking for her? What for? You have seen her, then? Did she go to your hut?"

"No," Gretchen replied, after a short silence.

"But everybody is looking for her."

"Ah! I can well believe it," cried Julius despairingly; "Gretchen, she wants to die."

"Come, Julius, do be reasonable," said the baron. "Where and how could she have killed herself? She has neither poison nor a pistol!"

One word, one terrible word which Christiane had often muttered in her delirium, flashed across Gretchen's memory.

"The Mouth of Hell!" she cried.

"Why! yes, let us go," said Julius.

The three rushed out of the house, followed by the servants.

Then occurred a terrible thing; Julius, standing on the edge of the precipice, tried to call his wife's name, but emotion choked his utterance, and his mouth remained open without his being able to articulate a sound; or else the heartbreaking cry which he tried to utter, died away in an indistinguishable murmur.

"Call her," he said in broken tones to his father and Gretchen. "Call her, then; you see I cannot!"

At last they arrived at the Mouth of Hell. And, looking round in all directions, they saw nothing.

They leant over the abyss.

And yet they saw nothing.

Julius, at the risk of slipping into the gulf, supported himself by a root, and, in order to see better, let his head and shoulders be suspended in empty space.

"Oh! father," said he, "I see something."

Fifty fathoms down, the trunk of a tree projected from the side of the precipice. On one of its large branches fluttered some shreds of the gown which Christiane had worn that morning, also a silk scarf of brilliant colours which belonged to her, and which she had bought in Greece.

"Farewell, father," said Julius. And he loosed his hold of the root. But already the baron had forcibly seized him by the arm.

He dragged him on to "terra firma," making a sign to the servants to stand near him, for fear that Julius should wrench himself out of his grasp.

"My son! my son! be a man, be a Christian!" he said.

"Ah! father!" Julius cried, bursting into heavy sobs, "what am I to do? I come home to find my wife killed, my son dead. Some people will say that I come back a millionaire."

Meanwhile the baron approached Gretchen.

"Gretchen," he said in a low voice, "you know something about all this. Samuel is mixed up in it. Gretchen, I adjure you to speak."

But Gretchen looked him straight in the face, and replied firmly and coldly:

"I know nothing—I have nothing to say."

Either she was absolutely ignorant, or unalterably determined.

The Baron von Hermelinfeld shook his head, and approached his son. Then, half dragging him, half coaxing him, he succeeded in leading him towards the castle.

The servants followed.

Gretchen remained alone on the brink of the Mouth of Hell.

" Yes," she said, " I will keep my oath, and I will be as secret and as unfathomable as thou, thou grim abyss. All the same, you have done wrong, Christiane; you have gone to challenge the justice of God above. I await it here on earth ! "

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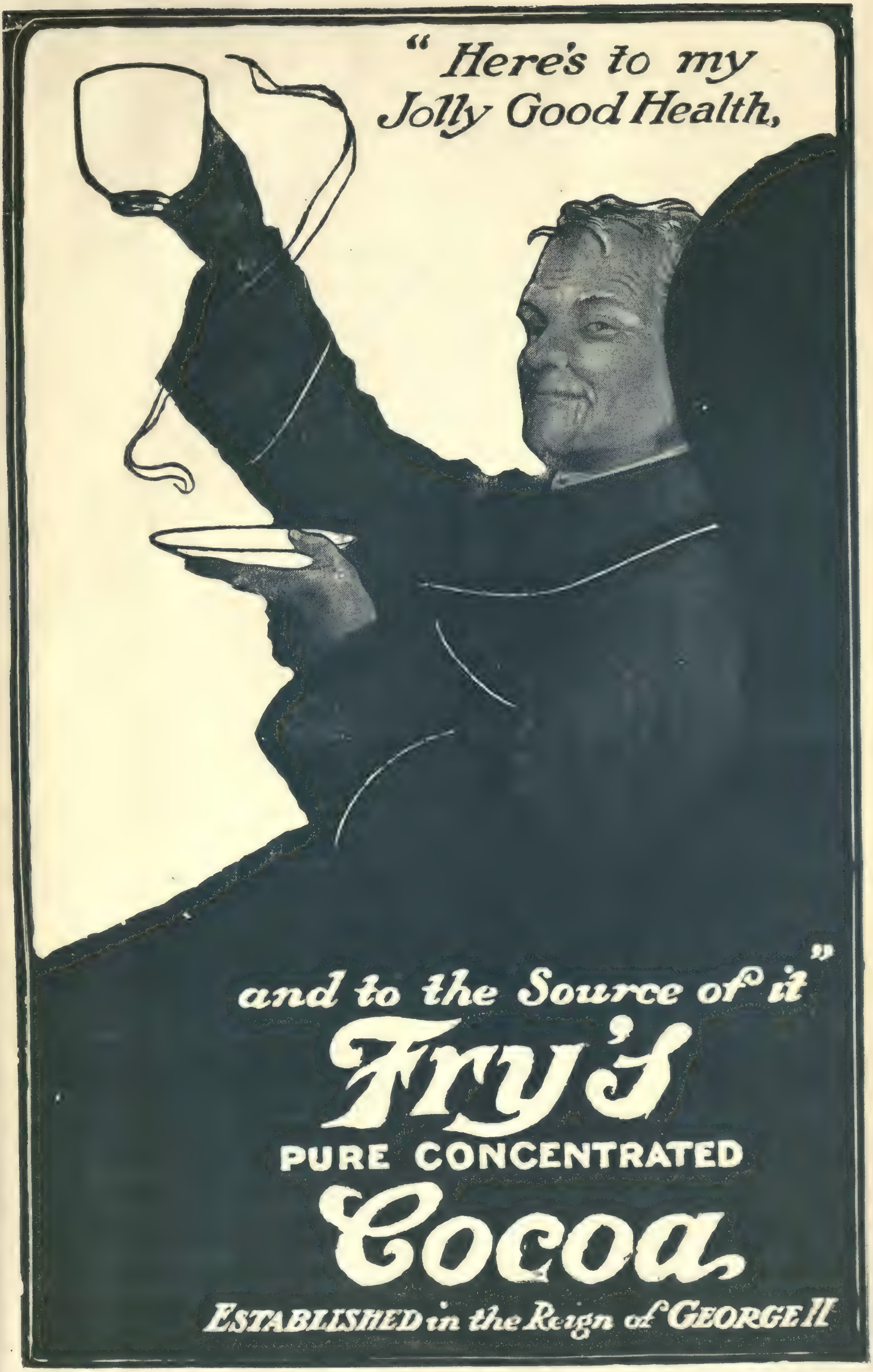
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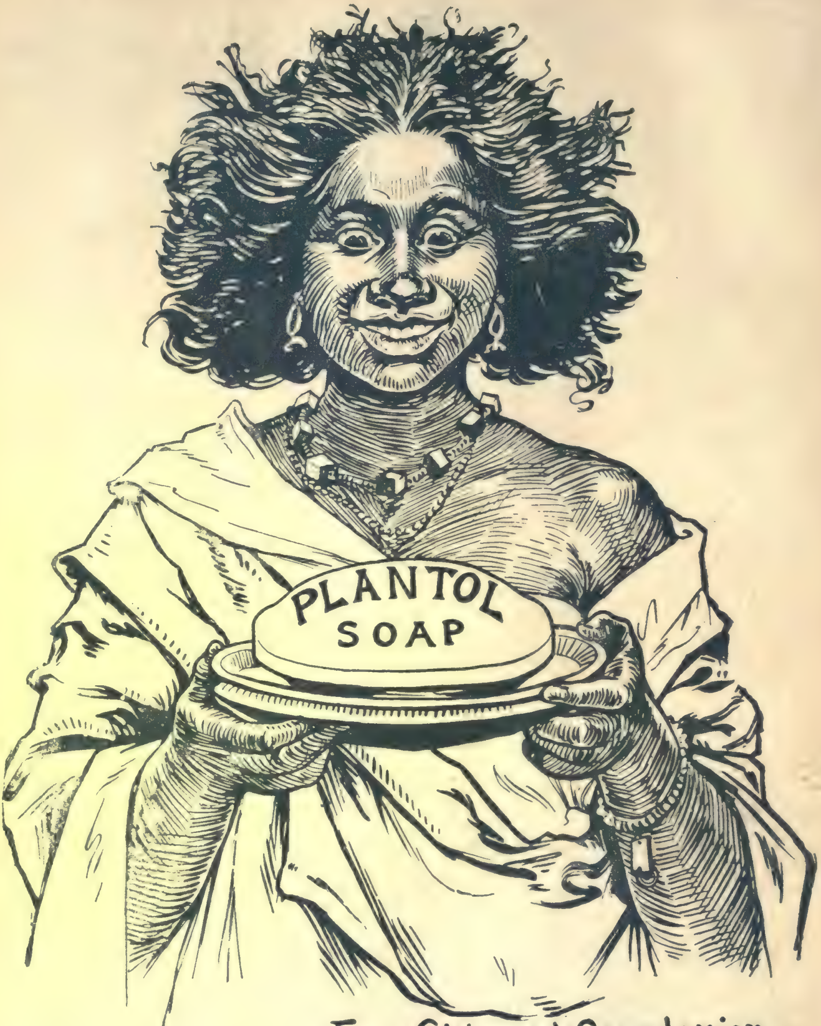

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